Ficino, Pico and Savonarola

The Evolution of Humanist Theology 1461/2-1498

Amos Edelheit

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The Evolution of Humanist Theology 1461/2–1498

By

Amos Edelheit

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To Salvatore I. Camporeale, O.P., *in memoriam*

Τούτῳ μὲν οὖν εἰ μέλλοιμεν τὴν προσήκουσαν χάριν ἐκτίσειν τῶν
εἰς ἡμᾶς εὐεργεσιῶν, οὐδ' ἂν ὁ σύμπας ἐξαρκέσειε χρόνος.

[Proclus, *Platonic Theology* I, p. 7]

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Amos Edelheit
Louvain, December 2007

INTRODUCTION

This book focuses on the relations between humanism, theology, and politics in Florence during the last decades of the fifteenth century. It deals with the relations between humanists and theologians and, by implication, between humanism and religion. The analysis offered here is centred on the evolution of a new humanist theology from the early 1460s to the end of the 1490s, a reaction to a deep sense of spiritual crisis felt by many individuals and followed by institutional and political crises. Being aware of the fact that the use of the term 'crisis' is always problematic in general in historiography, and even more so when used to explain aspects of the Italian Renaissance, in which so many different features can be equally regarded as 'moments of crisis', I would like first to clarify my use of the term. The first chapter of this book is focused on the extension of the well-documented internal institutional crisis of authority in the Dominican Order on the question of the reform, and on the nature of religious life towards much broader spiritual, political, and cultural dimensions. This is done by means of a detailed analysis of the personal account of the prior of Santa Maria Novella Giovanni Caroli, who deals with his personal experience by writing a dialogue in Lucca, after being deposited from his office and exiled from Florence by the authority of both the pope and the master general of his order. As a consequence of this detailed discussion, I hope that the term 'crisis' will become more concrete and real, and that it will be amplified by a specific historical context through which it can never be reduced to a personal concerns and perceptions.

Caroli's struggle for a local reform, taking into account the local tradition and history of each convent and led by the prior or the vicar of a congregation (instead of a general reform programme led by the master general), should be regarded as part of the ongoing effort to clarify the powerful effect of locality and neighbourhoods upon individuals in the urban culture of the Italian Renaissance. In this respect, the role of the monastery and the religious orders has not yet received enough scholarly attention.[1]

[1] See for instance Lauro Martines, *Strong Words. Writing and Social Strain in the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore 2001), especially the remarks in chapter one.

Rhetoric is at the centre of the second chapter, in which the assumption is that history can and should use also all kinds of literary expressions as sources, through which we may enrich our understanding of a period.[2] We shall find here, for instance, some contemporary reactions to the spiritual and political threat represented by the Turks, and a sense of looming catastrophe that haunted the Christian writers.

The more speculative aspects of humanist theology that were thrown up by the spiritual and theological tensions are discussed in chapters three and four, through detailed analyses of Marsilio Ficino's *De Christiana religione* and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Apologia*. The last chapter is dedicated to the 'Savonarola affair', its theological and political dimensions, as well as its influence in the evolution of humanist theology.

The term 'humanist theology' I shall argue, should replace common terms and notions that are still used in modern scholarship on the Florentine humanists of the second half of the fifteenth century, terms such as 'syncretism', 'fideism', or a 'Christian apologetic point of view'. This requires an amalgamation between two aspects of the history of the period, which many scholars have treated in isolation from one another: the history of humanists or humanism, and the history of professional theologians or contemporary theology.

This introduction is divided into two parts. In the first part I shall raise and discuss some historiographical issues; and in the second I shall introduce some reflections regarding the structure and method I have adopted in this book.

Proem: Some General Historiographical Issues

One of the serious problems in modern scholarly literature on the Renaissance is related to the way in which commentators treat the religious aspects of Renaissance culture. A good case study for this bias is Giovanni Caroli, the hero of the first chapter of this book. Caroli, a leading figure in the intellectual life of Florence during the last decades

[2] We can thus replace 'poetry' with 'rhetoric' in Martines' remarks in his *Strong Words*… p. 4: "… I underline two claims: (1) poetry is a part of the historical record and ought to be used by historians, even to the extent of basing provisional generalizations on it, and (2) if historians use history to throw light on poetry, they must accept that poetry may in turn throw light on history; the relatioship is reflexive."

of the fifteenth century, was almost completely neglected in modern scholarly literature, despite his importance, and most of his writings are still available only in manuscript form. It seems that his image as a traditional theologian was not attractive enough for secular scholars, and his oposition to Savonarola (and to popular forms of political prophecy and mysticism) disenfranchised his work from analysis, since many modern *pianogni* (as well as other students of Renaissance thought) were more attracted to mystical aspect of Renaissance religiosity.[3]

There are also other aspects, no less important or influential, of the way which this heterogeneous group of intellectuals called the humanists regarded the different forms of religious life and discourse. By paying insufficient attention to the more "traditional" aspects in the relations between the humanists and contemporary religiousity, the rich and complex spiritual world of the fifteenth century, in which humanism and scholasticism were the two dominant forces, is somehow lost sight of in many studies on the subject. Thus, we can lose sight not only of fifteenth-century scholastic theologians, but also of some of the most important humanist philosophers such as Ficino, and Pico, the heros of chapters three and four of this book, for whom such mystical religiousity was only one aspect in their religious personality.

Most of the scholarly literature focused on the intellectual history of the fifteenth century touches on basic questions regarding the nature of the Renaissance, the importance of the humanist movement, and its relations with philosophy, theology, and politics. We can clearly identify

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[3] Among many such historical works we can mention here Ernst Cassirer's 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. A Study in the History of Renaissance Ideas', in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 3 (1942), pp. 123–144 and 319–346; 'Ficino's Place in Intellectual History', in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 6 (1945), pp. 483–501; *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. M. Domandi (New York 1963); Charles B. Schmitt's 'Perrenial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz', in *Journal of the History of Ideas* XXVII (1966), pp. 505–532; '*Prisca Theologia* e *Philosophia Perennis*: due temi del Rinascimento italiano e la loro fortuna', in Giovannangiola Tarugi [ed.], *Il pensiero italiano del Rinascimento e il tempo nostro* (Firenze 1970), pp. 211–236; Frances A. Yates' *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London 1964); D.P. Walker's *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (London 1972); Cesare Vasoli's *Profezia e ragione. Studi sulla cultura del Cinquecento e del Seicento* (Napoli 1974); *Filosofia e religione nella cultura del Rinascimento* (Napoli 1988); Brian P. Copenhaver's 'The Secret of Pico's Oratio: Cabala and Renaissance Philosophy', in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* XXVI (2002), pp. 56–81; Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis. Historical Outlines of Western Spirituality in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Thought* (Dordrecht 2004).

four historiographical schools in Renaissance intellectual history active in the twentieth century, which originated mainly in the works of four great scholars: Hans Baron, Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and Eugenio Garin. Before presenting a critical discussion of each school I would like to stress that, despite obvious differences between them, not to mention all the other approaches, the most useful procedure is to combine some of the more important insights of the various schools, since each contains some grain of "historical truth" which can be detected in the historical sources.

Hans Baron introduced the term "civic humanism", a special brand of humanism which emerged, according to him, in Florence around 1402, during the war between the Florentine republic and Milan under the Visconti, and was best presented in the activity and writings of Leonardo Bruni, especially in his famous encomium of Florence.[4] Starting from the question of the chronology of this speech, Baron attempted to show that it was related to a specific moment of crisis in Florentine history, when the republic was under threat of attack from the powerful Visconti rulers of Milan. At that moment a new political notion was born out of both the deep humanistic interest in ancient classical texts and the present political crisis. This notion of "civic humanism" related the classical Athenian and Roman republicanism to the Florentine republic, and represented a "new" Renaissance political ethos or spirit, which set itself against mediaeval monarchism in general, and especially the Milanese city-state under the "tyranny" of Giangaleazzo Visconti.

Baron's thesis became extremely influential,[5] since it was focused on a specific historical moment, and created a clear-cut division between the "old" mediaeval political ethos of the monarchy and the "new" Renaissance ethos of political freedom and republicanism. But the historiographical significance of his thesis in regard to humanism lies in

[4] Hans Baron's most influential book was *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance—Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton 1966). But see also his *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, cited below in chapter two, n. 59, which contains also a critical edition of Bruni's *Laudatio Florentinae urbis*, and his *In Search of Civic Humanism*, 2 vols. (Princeton 1988). See also the selected texts of Bruni, translated and introduced by Gordon Griffiths, James Hankins, and David Thompson in *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni* (New York 1987).

[5] For some of the reasons for this influence in North America, with an evaluation and critique of Baron's thesis, and further references to his works and their influence, see Christopher S. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance—Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy* (Baltimore 2004), pp. 36–39.

the fact that Italian thinkers deeply interested in classical culture now received an immediate, concrete, political dimension. We are not dealing here with an isolated intellectual movement, with no interest in society and politics, or with learned bureaucrats and diplomats who only serve their masters, the Italian princes, but rather with intellectuals who created a new political ethos for their own time out of their profound concern with classical literature, history, and philosophy. This is how intellectual or cultural history became in Baron's view inseparable from political history. We all know that ideas and theories affect reality, but the problem for the historian is to identify a specific influence at a specific moment. This is exactly what Baron tried to do. One important consequence of his thesis, despite the many plausible criticisms it has received over the years, is that cultural history cannot be studied and understood without taking into account the social and political contexts and the different powers which affect reality. In other words, culture is ubiquitous, and the historian should look for its influence everywhere. This insight was common to both Baron and Garin. I shall discuss some of Garin's ideas in more detail below. Cassirer and Kristeller—as we shall soon see—did not share this insight.

It is quite easy to find problems in Baron's thesis: is this Florentine "civic humanism" relevant to other cities and humanists? Is it even relevant to Florence under the Medici regime? What about the early humanists in other cities who expressed political commitments to "tyrannical regimes"? What about the scholastic heritage of "the common good"? Are political terms like freedom and republicanism similar in the Renaissance to those used in modern times? What about Bruni's admiration for some contemporary tyrants? These and many other critical questions have been raised against Baron's thesis.[6] I would like to emphasize one critical point which is most relevant to this book: Baron's "civic humanism" is a completely secular notion and there is

[6] For a critical evaluation of Baron's thesis see especially James Hankins [ed.], *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge 2000). See also Albert Rabil, Jr., 'The Significance of "Civic Humanism" in the Interpretation of the Italian Renaissance', in Albert Rabil, Jr. [ed.], *Renaissance Humanism. Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia 1988), vol. 1, pp. 141–174; James Hankins, 'The "Baron Thesis" after Forty Years and some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni', in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995), pp. 309–338. Hankins argues on pp. 322–323 that in terms of political history Baron was wrong since Bruni seems to represent in his speech the interests of the ruling oligarchy by using Florence's traditional republican language rather than creating a "civic humanism". And see Riccardo Fubini, 'Renaissance Historian: The Career of Hans Baron', in *Journal of Modern History* LXIV (1992), pp. 541–574.

no place for religion in his interpretation. Thus, the only two sources of this "civic humanism" are classical texts and the political reality of the crisis. Baron did not consider the religious background of the humanists he discussed, and he neglected another important source for "civic humanism": the Scriptures and theological literature. As I shall try to show in the first two chapters of this book, we can find republican motifs derived from both Roman history and biblical examples in Giovanni Caroli's book discussed in chapter one, and in some humanist speeches of Ficino's students discussed in chapter two.

While trying to "rescue" the work of both Ficino and Pico, and the philosophy of the Renaissance in general, from being regarded as examples of "bad eclecticism", or from arguments regarding a lack of originality, Ernst Cassirer emphasized the mystical element in their philosophical thinking.[7] Thus, Cassirer related both Ficino's and Pico's philosophies to what he regarded as the crucial point of novelty in Renaissance philosophy: Nicholas of Cusa's theory of the "*coincidentia oppositorum*". This new kind of speculative thought created, we are told, a copulative theology which combined philosophy and religion, and in which contemplation meant a synthesis of logical and mystical attitudes. This theory was related by Cassirer to the symbolic knowledge through which the traditional negative theology turned into a positive theology, since true symbols contain relative accessibility to divine knowledge. Cassirer regarded this mystical vision of the divine, which brought Ficino and Pico to a purely intuitive kind of knowledge, beyond "the fixed dogmatic content of the Church's teaching", as the guiding principle of their philosophies.[8]

We can see traces of Cassirer's approach to Renaissance philosophy in another influential work: Frances Yates' *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, in which, in addition to many scattered references, three chapters are dedicated to Ficino and Pico.[9] Focusing on the importance of the Hermetic corpus in the Renaissance, Yates developed in her book the notion of the Renaissance philosopher as a *magus*, a magician who learned how to control nature for his own benefit. This was possible thanks to an important shift in the status of the magic and

[7] Cassirer, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola…'; 'Ficino's Place…'; *The Individual and the Cosmos…*

[8] Cassirer, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola…' pp. 138–143; 'Ficino's Place…' pp. 491–493.

[9] Yates, *Giordano Bruno…* chapters two, four, and five.

occult sciences during the Renaissance, especially from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards, under the increasing influence of Neoplatonic literature as well as some of the Church Fathers. Obviously, Ficino played a central role in this process, as a translator of and commentator on the Hermetic writings, which played a central part in his own philosophy through his idea of the ancient theology (*prisca theologia*), as well as through his deep interest in astrology and magic, especially in his *Libri de vita*.[10] To all these "new" and rediscovered Platonic, Neoplatonic, and Hermetic writings, which were the basis of the new Renaissance attitude towards magic, Yates added Pico's interest in Kabbalah in general, and in Kabbalist magic in particular. In her account of Pico, who according to her "was really marrying Hermetism to Cabalism", the process of replacing the old wicked and ignorant forms of magic with "practical Cabala, the learned Hebrew magic which takes its place beside the learned Neoplatonic magic as one of the two disciplines which together make up the equipment of the Renaissance Magus" was accomplished, and the notion of the Renaissance philosopher as a magician was most clearly presented.[11]

There is no doubt that a "mystical" element exists in both Ficino and Pico. Both Cassirer and Yates emphasized this element in Renaissance philosophy, as part of the history of ideas, to which Renaissance thinkers made their unique contribution. But both Cassirer and Yates almost completely disregarded the political aspect of the magus as both a religious and a political leader, represented in the figure of Hermes Trismegistus on the one hand, and the specific interest of Ficino and Pico in the more traditional and contemporary problems of religion and theology on the other. In that respect, the fact that Ficino was a priest and deeply concerned with the state of Christianity in his own times, or that Pico was deeply involved in scholastic theology, were almost ignored by Cassirer and Yates. Their discussions of the mystical or magical element are only on the level of ideas, and they are

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 12–43, 62–83. For the importance of the idea of *prisca theologia* in the Renaissance, and for a more critical and balanced approach, see D.P. Walker's *The Ancient Theology*… also mentioned in chapter three, n. 3, together with other discussions of the ancient theology. For Ficino's *De vita* see Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark [eds.], *Marsilio Ficino, Three Books On Life* (New York 1989).

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 84–116; the citations are from pp. 106–107. Yates' discussion of Pico and the Kabbalah had great influence on Chaim Wirszubski, whose detailed philological analyses of Pico's Kabbalistic theses were presented in his *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism* (Cambridge 1989).

presented as if these ideas were completely separated from the more traditional questions regarding religion or theology. Without detailed consideration of the religious and theological context, Cassirer's mystical vision or Yates' magus become secular notions, derived directly from pagan classical philosophical and magical texts and separated from their immediate religious Christian context.[12] In chapters three and four of this book I shall try to deal with some of the traditional religious and theological problems in Ficino's *De Christiana religione* and in Pico's *Apologia*.

The syncretist tradition represented by the phrases *prisca theologia* and *philosophia perennis* stands at the centre of Charles B. Schmitt's studies, in which Ficino and Pico are described as important influences for later figures in this tradition.[13] According to Schmitt, the syncretist tradition had started with ancient philosophers like Plutarch, developed in the patristic and Neoplatonic writings, and was "an undercurrent in early modern philosophy and one which does not fit in very well with many generalizations which we read concerning the Enlightenment, atheism, the rise of "modern science," and the secularization of philosophy during the XVIth, XVIIth, and XVIIIth centuries. Nevertheless, the tradition of perennial philosophy does represent one strand of early modern thought, an element which seems to me to be underestimated and imperfectly understood."[14] These important observations are still relevant. In addition to his problematic and anachronistic use of the term "syncretism", or "syncretistic and eclectic tendency", which may obliterate the clear status of the Christian truth above and beyond all other truths for both Ficino and Pico,[15] Schmitt does not discuss in detail

[12] A critical account of Cassirer's approach to Pico, which is correctly described as "a philosophical meditation on selected texts" more "than a historical account" can be found in William G. Craven's *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola—Symbol of His Age* (Genève 1981), pp. 12–14. Craven's critique of Yates' discussion of Pico and the Kabbalah can be found on pp. 127–129.

[13] Schmitt, 'Perrenial Philosophy…'; '*Prisca Theologia*…'

[14] Schmitt, 'Perrenial Philosophy…' pp. 531–532. Plutarch, Jamblichus, Proclus, Augustine, and Lactantius are mentioned, among others, as representing the ancient discussions of ancient theology, while Psellus and Pletho represent later discussions; see pp. 509–510.

[15] See, e.g., Schmitt's description in his 'Perrenial Philosophy…' p. 513: "Not content with the teachings of Hermes, the Chaldeans, Pythagoras, and the Hebrew mystics, Pico proposed other theses to defend, including the harmony between Plato and Aristotle. It is precisely here that he went beyond Ficino's notion of twin unbroken traditions of philosophical and theological truth. Truth, instead of residing in two traditions only, resides in many. Ficino's *prisci theologi* have no special access to truth,

the works of Ficino and Pico, nor does he mention the *De Christiana religione* or the *Apologia*; for him, Ficino and Pico are only important representatives of the syncretist tradition in the Renaissance, "probably the most direct intellectual predecessors of Steuco".[16] Schmitt was interested in the syncretist tradition in early modern philosophy between Ficino and Newton, and just like Cassirer, Yates, and Walker, it was for him a chapter in the intellectual history or in the history of early modern philosophy. All these scholars concentrated on the question of the "what", i.e., on the contents of what Ficino and Pico say, and on their classical and mediaeval sources. But it seems to me that the question of the "why" is no less important: why was it that Ficino, during the 1460s and 1470s, began to be interested in developing his notion of ancient theology, part of his new conception of religion and its importance for humanity? As I shall try to show in chapter three of this book, Ficino's notion of the ancient theology represented both his rejection of contemporary religious culture and his desire for the foundation of a new one. If, as we shall see below, Eugenio Garin developed the idea of the new philosophical culture of the Renaissance, we should also think of a new religious culture which originated in the Renaissance, a humanist theology in which Ficino and Pico played a key role.

The new methods and professional expertise of the humanists and their interest in the five classical *studia humanitatis* (grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and ethics), were for Paul Oskar Kristeller at the centre of the humanist movement. According to Kristeller, "the *studia humanitatis* includes one philosophical discipline, that is, morals, but it excludes by definition such fields as logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics, as well as mathematics and astronomy, medicine, law, and theology".[17]

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but aspects of it are to be found in Averroes, the *Koran*, the Cabala, the writings of the medieval schoolmen, and in many other places as well. In Pico we have one of the high points of syncretistic or eclectic tendency, which was to become even more popular and far-reaching in the XVIth century." See also Schmitt's description of the 'exclusivist' tradition, as opposed to the syncretist, in his '*Prisca Theologia*…' p. 212: "Per gli esclusivisti le cose sono soltanto o nere o bianche, o vere o false, o valide o invalide." This observation is most true also for "syncretistic" thinkers like Ficino and Pico.

[16] Schmitt, 'Perrenial Philosophy…' p. 507; see also the description of other syncretistic thinkers on pp. 513–514. As the title of this article suggests, the detailed discussion here is of Steuco (pp. 515–524) and of some reactions to his work (pp. 524–531).

[17] Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, ed. Michael Mooney (Columbia 1979), p. 23. And see also Ronald G. Witt, 'The Humanism of Paul Oskar Kristeller', in John Monfasani [ed.], *Kristeller Reconsidered. Essays on his Life and Scholarship* (New York 2006), pp. 257–267; see especially pp. 258–259.

On this crucial point, as he himself acknowledged, he stood in sharp opposition to Eugenio Garin who, according to Kristeller, attempted "to identify Renaissance humanism with the philosophy, the science, or the learning of the period as a whole".[18] I am emphasizing this point since it is crucial to this book: the notion of "humanist theology", which I use throughout, as we have just seen, is only "possible" according to Garin's approach to the Renaissance and humanism. Since Kristeller insisted in all his studies on this "exclusion by definition" or total separation between theology and humanism, the term "humanist theology" would be considered by him to be a contradiction in terms. Yet we need only consider Valla's and Erasmus' deep interest in philosophy and theology, or Poliziano's interest in logic, in order to have serious doubts about this "exclusion by definition". Kristeller's emphasis on the institutional context of the "new" professional men of letters, and his general view of humanism as a phase in the history of rhetoric, are also opposed to Baron's account of civic humanism and its commitment to the common good, to republicanism, and to politics in general.[19]

Over the course of his long career, Kristeller changed his view of the relation between humanism and philosophy. In an early article which was published in 1939 he was willing to regard Ficino and Pico as humanists and to treat the humanism in Florence in the second half of the fifteenth century as "a truly philosophical school in Italian humanism", though his general approach was still that "the humanists produced mere literature, not philosophy; they wanted to remove the authority of Aristotle, but they put in his place not Plato, but Cicero".[20] This point is again crucial to this book, since the philosophical works of Cicero began to play a central role in the fifteenth century, as I shall try to show in chapter four, in the discussion of Pico's *Apologia*. Yet one can hardly claim that Ficino the Platonist, or even Pico in some periods of his writing activity, replaced Aristotle with Cicero, and Cicero alone. But in later discussions of humanism and philosophy Kristeller insisted on a separation between a scholastic culture which he regarded

[18] *Ibid*. On Garin's and Kristeller's different approaches see Hankins, 'Two Twentieth-Century Interpreters of Renaissance Humanism: Eugenio Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller', now in his *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Roma 2003–2004), vol. 1, pp. 573–590; Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance*… chapter two.

[19] Hankins, 'The "Baron Thesis"…' pp. 317–318.

[20] Kristeller, 'Florentine Platonism and its Relations with Humanism and Scholasticism', in *Church History* 8 (1939), pp. 201–211, reprinted in his *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* III (Roma 1993), pp. 39–48; the citations are from p. 40.

as philosophical, and a humanist culture which he identified with grammar, rhetoric, and literature.[21] Under such historiographical constraint we have a problem in defining both Ficino and Pico. Pico, who wrote one of the most representative documents of the new humanist culture, the famous speech which was later entitled *De hominis dignitate*, and who was regarded by contemporary humanists such as Poliziano and Barbaro as a member of their "intellectual milieu", should—if we adopt this approach of Kristeller's—be excluded from the humanist movement since he was too involved in philosophy and in contemporary scholasticism and hardly concerned at all with philology, or, to use Kristeller's terms, he stressed content rather than form.[22] We have the same problem in regard to Ficino, who dedicated most of his intellectual activity to translating and interpreting the philosophical texts of Plato and the Neoplatonists which were almost completely unknown to the scholastic philosophers in the West during the Middle Ages, and who did so by using his humanistic skills.

Kristeller's approach to humanism was much more limited and restricted than that of Baron and his followers, and did not take into account any political element in the humanist movement. Humanism, according to Kristeller, was an important cultural movement, but it was focused on a very specific part of culture, basically the linguistic disciplines. He saw no relation between the humanists' interest in rhetoric (both in theory and in practice), their new attitude to Aristotle and Cicero, their critique of scholasticism, their political activity, and their philosophical view-point.[23] In the same way his detailed studies of Ficino's philosophy concentrated on the philosophical system of Ficino, his originality and his way of using ancient sources, on the specific nature of his Platonism and its origins, without relating these to other cultural, political, or religious elements.[24] A good example of Kristeller's "philosophical" approach can be found in the beginning of

[21] This point was made very clearly in the discussion between Kristeller and Garin in *L'Opera e il pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola nella storia dell'umanesimo, convegno internazionale (Mirandola: 15–18 Settembre 1963)*, 2 vols. (Firenze 1965), vol. 1, pp. 32–33; I shall come back to this discussion in the presentation of Garin's approach to the humanist movement. See also Kristeller's *Renaissance Thought*… pp. 252–255.

[22] Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*… p. 254.

[23] Such a relation is discussed, for instance, in Victoria Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance* (Cornell 1985). Kahn clearly related herself to Baron's thesis when she stated on p. 29 that "Quattrocento humanism was a civic humanism…"

[24] See Kristeller's *Il pensiero filosofico di Marsilio Ficino* (Firenze 1953; revised edition, Firenze 1988), especially the second part pp. 215–437.

the chapter on the inner experience in his *Il pensiero filosofico di Marsilio Ficino*, where he criticizes the use of the term "mysticism" in this context, since it may represent a confusion between religion and philosophy, whereas he is interested in the inner experience as a philosophical phenomenon and a foundation for philosophical interpretation.[25] The assumption underlying this approach is that the historian of philosophy can, and indeed should, separate theological and religious aspects from philosophical ones, which are obviously regarded as more important. But such an assumption becomes problematic if we consider that Ficino himself used the term "theology" in the title of his *magnum opus*, the *Platonic Theology*, that he dedicated a book to a discussion of the Christian religion, that many of his letters deal with spiritual issues, and that he was ordained a priest in 1473. In other words, we can say that there is enough evidence to show that Ficino was profoundly interested in religion and theology, and that his philosophy cannot be separated from these elements, nor can they be treated as marginal.[26]

Kristeller's account of Ficino as a philosopher, who was influenced (to some extent) by humanism and scholasticism, and whose importance for scholars lies in his philosophical works and in his commentaries on Platonic dialogues, has been very influential, especially in North America, where one can speak of a 'school of Kristeller'.[27] This school sees in the *Platonic Theology* and in the commentaries on Plato Ficino's main contribution to the history of philosophy, through which not only did the Platonic dialogues become a central part of European thought, but also a new systematic, rationalistic, and secular (terms underlying Kristeller's approach) philosophy was created, in the tradition of Western philosophy between Plato and Kant. Presuppositions regarding the superior status of philosophy among all other disciplines (and its nature as a completely separate branch of knowledge from the humanist disciplines), as well as a notion of progress, can easily be traced in this approach. Thus, for instance, we can

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[25] *Ibid.*, p. 219: "Ma il termine 'misticismo' che tende a rendere imprecisi i confini fra religione e filosofia è fatto più per confondere in quanto a noi importa comprendere l'esperienza interiore come fenomeno filosofico e come fondamento di un' interpretazione filosofica."

[26] See Paul F. Grendler's important remarks in his 'Paul Oskar Kristeller On Renaissance Universities', in Monfasani [ed.], *Kristeller Reconsidered*… pp. 89–130; especially pp. 117–118.

[27] Michael J.B. Allen referred to Kristeller's graduate students at Columbia as "golden *brigata*" in his 'Paul Oskar Kristeller and Marsilio Ficino: *e tenebris revocaverunt*', in Monfasani [ed.], *Kristeller Reconsidered*… pp. 1–18; see p. 1.

find in Tamara Albertini's discussion of the will and the intellect in Ficino modern terminology like 'rational metaphysics' or 'epistemology'.[28] Michael J.B. Allen accepts the fact that Ficino was a religious man who wrote also religious works such as *On the Christian Religion*, sermons, and many spiritual letters, but he tends to see in all this activity merely a popular aspect of Ficino, which does not represent his real contributions. Ficino's real contributions are to be found in his Platonic commentaries and the *Platonic Theology*, to which Allen has dedicated all his studies on Ficino. His account of *On the Christian Religion* is symptomatic of his attitude. According to Allen this work is "… an explicitly apologetic work written after Ficino's admission to the priesthood and studiously avoids many of his characteristically Platonic ideas".[29] I shall

[28] Tamara Albertini, 'Intellect and Will in Marsilio Ficino. Two Correlatives of a Renaissance Concept of the Mind', in Michael J.B. Allen and Valery Rees with Martin Davies [eds.], *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy* (Leiden 2002), pp. 203–225; on p. 223 we find that "One has also to realize that the issue of happiness, which was central to the medieval debate, had already lost its importance for Ficino by the time of the *Theologia Platonica*. His quest was of a different nature. The dilemma became *a purely epistemological one*…" Rational metaphysics appears on p. 225. Turning Ficino into a modern philosopher, or locating him in the golden chain of rational metaphysics between the Presocratics and Hegel, in Albertini's citation on p. 225 of Kristeller's *Marsilio Ficino and his Work after Five Hunddred Years* (Florence 1987), p. 16, are among the historiographical problems we still need to deal with in order to arrive at an understanding of Ficino in his own context. It is perhaps important to cite Kristeller's own words here since they reveal some of his historiographical assumptions: "… [Ficino's] greatest significance as a thinker (and also as a scholar) rests on the fact that he constitutes an important member and link (not always recognized) in that golden chain which is the tradition of rational metaphysics that leads from the Presocratics and Plato to Kant, Hegel and beyond. In my long career as a scholar, and in the midst of hard, difficult and often disastrous times, this tradition has been for me a rock of intellectual and moral support, much stronger than the numerous fashionable theories and ideologies that have come and gone in rapid succession over the years. I hope that this tradition will also give the same support, in the midst of future crises which can hardly be avoided, to some of our successors among the thinkers and scholars of the future."

[29] Michael J.B. Allen, *Synoptic Art—Marsilio Ficino on the History of Platonic Interpretation* (Firenze 1998), p. 42, n. 89. See also my critical account of this view in chapter three, n. 3, and my detailed analysis of Ficino's work presented in chapter three. And see Allen's remarks in his 'Paul Oskar Kristeller and Marsilio Ficino…' pp. 5–6 regarding Ficino "whose most arresting ideas are often buried in the veins of Platonic or Plotinian commentary." On p. 11 Allen regards also Ficino's *Platonic Theology* as an apologetic work, and distiguishes between Ficino as a Christian philosopher and as an interpreter of Plato and Plotinus. But in his critique of Kristeller's rationalistic approch to Ficino (thus neglecting "theosophical, demonological, prophetic, medical, and magical themes" in Ficino, and making him much more orthodox) presented on pp. 17–18, as well as in using the phrase "intellectual mysticism" with regard to Ficino's episte-

present a different interpretation of this work and its importance in chapter three of this book.

On the other hand, and not quite in harmony with this tendency, we find in "Kristeller's school" another tendency in regard to both Ficino and Pico, that is, an emphasis on their scholastic origins.[30] In the terms of this school, philosophy, by its very nature, is rational, and cannot be easily reconciled with religious thinking, which is by its very nature irrational. This is the reason for the underestimation of a work such as *On the Christian Religion*, which is regarded, as we have just seen, as merely apologetic. But the emphasis on the continuity of scholasticism in these thinkers cannot be reconciled with this approach, since scholastic philosophy is by its very nature religious thinking. The scholastic philosopher and theologian use logical procedures and analyses in their discussions, but without going beyond faith. Also, it is difficult to reconcile the emphasis on novelty and rationality with the emphasis on the continuity of the scholastic tradition, both in the same thinkers. It is true that in terms of Kristeller's historiographical school the Platonic and Neoplatonic writings, which represent pagan classical and rationalist thinking, also contain religious aspects (much more than in the Aristotelian corpus), which were transferred to Christianity and to the scholastic mediaeval culture through the authoritative writings of the Fathers, and especially Augustine, and through the influential status of Dionysius the Areopagite; but we do not find in Kristeller's school detailed accounts and discussions of these religious and theological aspects in terms of contemporary mediaeval and Renaissance religiosity, the immediate religious context of Ficino and Pico, which, in addition to ancient pagan philosophical texts, deeply affected and shaped their philosophical thinking.[31]

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mology and psychology on p. 15, Allen returns to the mystical and Hermetic approach we have seen in Cassirer and Yates. My argument here is that between Kristeller's rationalistic approach (Ficino between Plato and Kant) and Allen's intellectual mysticism we have the context of the scholastic philosophy and theology, which cannot be regarded either as 'rationalistic' according to Kristeller, or as 'mysticism' according to Allen. It is against this background that we should begin to see how Ficino deals with philosophical and theological problems by using his new Platonic and Neoplatonic sources.

[30] Kristeller, 'The Scholastic Background of Marsilio Ficino', in *Traditio* II (1944), pp. 257–318; 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and His Sources', in *L'Opera e il pensiero*… vol. I, pp. 35–133.

[31] See, e.g., the works of Michael J.B. Allen, cited and dicussed in chapter three nn. 3, 4, 6, 22, 68, 81, 185; chapter four nn. 169, 179; and the works of James Hankins

The last historiographical school concerned with the study of the intellectual history of fifteenth-century Italy to be discussed here is that of Eugenio Garin and his students and followers, three of whom are most relevant to my argument: Charles Trinkaus, Salvatore Camporeale, and John O'Malley.

Garin rejected the separation between humanism and philosophy or between philosophy and theology. He presented a dialectical approach to culture in general, and to humanism in particular. Against the "tendencies of separation and exclusion" he argued that by contrasting or even just separating humanism from philosophy we loose the internal dialectical tension of a cultural crisis. By such a separation and exclusion we reach external and contradictory conclusions which neglect the meaning of different historical points of view. Thus, we reach rigid and monolithic conclusions which disregard the true historical dynamics.[32]

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cited and dicussed in chapter two nn. 14, 241; chapter three nn. 2, 3, 5, 13, 34. And see also Paul F. Grendler's remarks mentioned in n. 26 above.

[32] Eugenio Garin, 'Le interpretazioni del pensiero di Giovanni Pico', in *L'Opera e il pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola…* vol. 1, pp. 3–33; see p. 11: "Siamo, in effetti, dinanzi a un punto chiave della storiografia, e non solo pichiana; in questa prospettiva si sono mossi quanti hanno privilegiato l'aspetto retorico, letterario, dell'umanesimo, includendovi il neoaristotelismo di tipo etico-politico, o, se si vuole, anche logico-poetico, ed opponendolo alla filosofia, che sarebbe da considerarsi sostanzialmente staccata dalla problematica degli *studia humanitatis*, e, se non opposta, almeno da essi diversa, e per gran parte autonoma rispetto alla loro efficacia. Nello stesso ambito, d'altra parte, tendono a rimanere, anche se con accento tutt'affatto diverso e a volte opposto, quanti, da un punto di vista filosofico-scientifico vedono umanesimo e filosofia come cose separate, riconoscendo al primo il merito di avere introdotto nuove conoscenze di testi, ma non di avere inciso sul rinnovamento dei metodi d'indagine, della classificazione delle varie discipline, e, infine, della concezione della vita. Ancora: a queste tendenze, diciamo così, separatistiche, che vanno della tesi estrema *umanesimo contro scienza e filosofia* a una tesi moderata *umanesimo e filosofia*, si legano in qualche modo le varie tematiche del controrinascimento, le quali attraverso il procedimento, se non dell'antitesi, almeno dell'esclusione, rischiano spesso di trasformare una tensione dialecttica interna a un momento di crisi della cultura in una contrapposizione estrinseca che finisce col privare di senso le varie posizioni, in tal modo sistematizzate e cristallizzate nel contrasto." See also Garin's reply to Kristeller (already mentioned in n. 21 above), pp. 32–33: "Per chiarezza, tuttavia, intendo precisare che io non identifico la cultura scolastica con la filosofia e la cultura 'umanistica' con la grammatica, la retorica e la letteratura. Ermolao Barbaro, traduttore e commentatore di Temistio e, prima ancora, di Aristotele, è filosofo, anche se il suo orientamento culturale lo porta a dare rilievo a certi problemi e a certi campi d'indagine più vicini alle *artes sermocinales*. Pico è umanista, non tanto perchè latinista e grecista, quanto perchè di fronte agli autori, ai testi del passato, alla 'storia', alla 'morale', assume un attegiamento che gli 'studia humanitatis' avevano favorito ed alimentato in ogni senso. Per questo ho affermato che il conflitto fra Pico e Barbaro è *interno* all'umanesimo. Per questo io credo che l'urto fra

Garin presented a wholly different approach to humanism, philosophy, and cultural history. According to him it is impossible for the historian to restrict himself to dealing only with disciplines and professional changes, since culture is never limited to such things alone. The *studia humanitatis* of the humanists has a broad and deep significance, since it affected all aspects of life in the Renaissance. The "philosophy of non-philosophers" is the true object of the cultural historian of the Renaissance, since it embraces the new philosophy and the new mode of thinking in both the speculative and practical spheres.[33] Here, we are again closer to Baron's approach to humanism, though with a more profound conception of cultural history (and with an important thesis regarding the shift in Florentine humanism from the first half of the fifteenth century to the second half, which will be discussed below), and one which eschews a detailed analysis of Florentine political history. If Baron's starting point was the chronology of Bruni's speech, by means of which he related the new interest in the *studia humanitatis* to a new kind of *vita activa*, Garin's notion of the cultural implications of philology also included a new critical point of view of the birth of historical consciousness.[34] Garin's approach forced him to deal with many

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cultura umanistica e cultura scolastica non si possa ridurre al bisticcio fra grammatici e filosofi, ma sia anch'esso utro fra filosofi e filosofi." See also the methodological remark on p. 6: "Concludendo, nel caso del Pico, sembra pericolosa in modo particolare ogni sistematizzazione della materia che metta in ombra la verità dei motivi subordinandoli a un tema privilegiato: la cabala, la concordia dei filosofi, la critica delle pseudoscienze e delle superstizioni, la dignità dell'uomo, la filosofia dell'amore, il rinnovamento di una religione dell'interiorità."

[33] Garin, *Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Bari 1954; reprinted Bari 1973), pp. 38–39: "Onde non è forse del tutto nel vero—almeno nell'espressione—neppure quello che ebbe a dire il Gentile, dell'Umanesimo eloquentissimo ed incomparabile evocatore, essere quella degli umanisti inconsapevole filosofia di non filosofi—poeti, letterati, giuristi, politici e, magari, predicatori e profeti—che si opponeva e distruggeva la filosofia dei filosofi; e povera cosa in sé—cioè filosoficamente parlando—la logica del Valla, l'etica del Salutati, del Bruni, del Manetti, o la retorica di un Poliziano. Se questa fosse stata proprio non-filosofia, e cioè solo retorica e poesia e letteratura e omelia, la filosofia vera non si sarebbe scrollata per invettive e scherni, assai più antichi del 300 e del 400. La verità è che proprio quella cosiddetta non-filosofia era la filosofia nuova nel suo nascimento, concezione davvero nuova della realtà intesa *sub specie hominis*, e cioè in termini di libertà e volontà e attività; non un mondo immoto, definito in tutte le sue articolazioni, non una storia tutta scontata, ma operta, e miracoloso transformare il tutto, e rischio e, insomma, virtù."

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 99: "… una filologia, si badi, tanto ricca e complessa da accogliere in sè ogni posizione critica dell'uomo, e non già pseudo-filosofia di non filosofi in lotta contro la filosofia, ma l'unica seria, vera, nuova filosofia. La quale, proprio perché restaurazione dell'antico e scoperta dell'antico fu posizione dell'antico, come altro

aspects of the cultural history of the Renaissance and the dialectical relations between them, without separating philosophy from theology, religion and politics.[35] While his earlier account of Pico still included problematic and anachronistic notions such as "rational faith" or "the unity of the spirit", which have been criticized with some justification by Craven, his later accounts of Pico and humanism were more moderate and historical.[36] It is also important to mention the fact that Garin too, like Cassirer and Yates, regarded the mystical, magical, and Hermetic element as a central theme in Renaissance philosophy in general, and in Ficino and Pico in particular, through which a new image of man was shaped: a divine human being, the representative of God on earth, the ruler of the elemental world. This Hermetic element was regarded by Renaissance thinkers as the key to all the mysteries.[37]

Garin's dialectical approach can be traced, for instance, in the works of Cesare Vasoli, which concentrate, among other things, on the relation between the humanists and the religious and spiritual life in the Renaissance.[38]

The term "humanist theology" which I use in this book, derives, as we have seen, from Garin's dialectical and sensitive approach to humanism, and can also be found in the studies of Charles Trinkaus, Salvatore Camporeale, John O'Malley, and John D'Amico.[39] The un-

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da noi, amorosamente ricostruito, ma proprio per questo non più confuso con noi: definizione di quello e di noi, scoperta dell'oggetto e del verace rapporto di noi con esso, con quel mondo storico che l'uomo pone ed a cui si oppone, e in rapporto al quale si viene scoprendo e formando."

[35] This approach is best presented in Garin's *L'umanesimo italiano. Filosofia e vita civile nel Rinascimento* (Bari 1952; reprinted Bari 1970) and in his *La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento italiano—ricerche e documenti* (Firenze 1961).

[36] Garin, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: vita e dottrina* (Firenze 1937), pp. 56, 65; Craven's critique of Garin's studies of Pico, and to some extent his approach to humanism, can be found in his *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola*… e.g., pp. 5–8, 24–27, 77–78, 116–120, 126–127.

[37] Garin, *Medioevo*… pp. 141–178, 274–275.

[38] See Vasoli's article 'Giovanni Nesi tra Donato Acciaiuoli e Girolamo Savonarola—Testi editi e inediti', cited and discussed in chapter two, n. 198 and context, and his book on Ficino, *Quasi sit deus—studi su Marsilio Ficino*, cited and discussed in chapter three, nn. 8, 65, and context. See also his books mentioned in n. 3 above.

[39] Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness—Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols. (London 1970) and his *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism* (Ann Arbor 1983); Salvatore I. Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla—Umanesimo e teologia* (Firenze 1972); *Lorenzo Valla—umanesimo, riforma e controriforma, studi e testi* (Roma 2002); John O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome—Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in Sacred Orators of the Papal Court 1450–1521* (Durham, North Carolina 1979). See also the historiographical remarks

derlying approach here is that the same figure can be a humanist in terms of his education and with regard to the main part of his activity, but can also be a philosopher, whose philosophical thinking is influenced by his humanist background; moreover, he can be a theologian as well, one who creates a new kind of theology, influenced by his humanist and philosophical perspectives. Such a theology, despite being influenced by scholastic thinking, nonetheless rejected some of the more technical and dogmatic aspects of scholastic theology, and replaced them with a new approach to religion and its history as well as a new way of doing and writing theology.[40] In the writings of these scholars, we find detailed discussions of the specific relations between humanism and religion, the way in which the *studia humanitatis* and a new attitude towards classical texts affected religious life in the Renaissance.

Since scholars in the wake of Kristeller usually do not pay serious attention to the religious works of Ficino and Pico, I felt that there was no reason to refer continually, in the detailed discussions which make up the bulk of this book, to many important studies by this group of scholars which deal with other aspects of these thinkers. I discuss such works only where they touch on points which are relevant to my discussion. In regard to Pico's *Apology*, no scholar from either the school of Kristeller or that of Garin has devoted a study to this work. Even Garin himself did not include the *Apology* among the collection of texts with Italian translations which he published in 1942.

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in Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla—umanesimo*…(2002), p. 247, n. 60; p. 346, n. 12. For the relation between Roman humanism and religion see John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome—Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore 1983), especially pp. 144–168. D'Amico on p. 167 prefers, for his historical context, the term *theologia erudita* or *docta* to Trinkaus' *theologia rhetorica*.

[40] On the humanist "revolution" in theology during the sixteenth century, see Ann Moss' *Renaissance Truth and the Latin Language Turn* (Oxford 2003), p. 70: "Cortesi's project is not one of philosophical inquiry. It is, as the prologue had made clear, a linguistic project fulfilling a dual purpose: to demonstrate that theological debate can be articulated in the classical Latin of the humanists, and to persuade back to theology those humanists who had turned away from it in fastidious distaste for its rebarbative and, to their ears, nonsensical language"; p. 71: "The novelty of Cortesi's commentary, however, lies elsewhere. Late medieval and contemporary expositions of the *Sentences* were primarily exercises in logical analysis and strict argument. What Cortesi is attempting is a wholesale replacement of late medieval logical method by patterns of exposition derived from classical prose style, here applied across the Latin language divide to matter that had been conceived and developed in the late medieval idiom." See also John F. D'Amico's *Renaissance Humanism*… pp. 115–240.

Representatives of the different approaches, when they do take into account the religious thinking of Ficino and Pico, tend to emphasize one aspect while neglecting others, and sometimes they miss the important differences between these two thinkers.[41] Garin and his followers emphasize the novelty in the thinking of Ficino and Pico, sometimes neglecting the more traditional aspects of their thought, and in the case of Pico, the influence of scholasticism. On the other hand, some scholars emphasize the continuity of the scholastic tradition, but neglect the novelties and classical influences.[42] In both cases we are facing overly schematic stances which should be replaced by a more sophisticated approach to the material. As we have seen, the important trend of emphasizing the influence of Neoplatonic, gnostic, Hermetic, Kabbalistic, and magical traditions, which are neither rationalistic nor theological but still present deep religious and mystical elements, by scholars such as Cassirer, Yates, Walker, Wirszubski, and Garin, cannot be studied separately from the more traditional theological questions and the profound tensions which were part of religious and spiritual life in the Renaissance.

I have chosen to study two works which have a religious character, in order to examine the term "humanist theology" and its relevance. In Ficino's *On the Christian Religion* I see a treatise which represents an aspect of his thought that should not be underestimated. True, this work was published by Ficino both in Latin and in Italian; but this does not mean that it was addressed only to the less educated readers. Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, one of the many Platonic dialogues which were unknown during the Middle Ages in the West, was also written by him in both languages, not long before the publication of *On the Christian Religion*. It is reasonable to assume that the potential readers of these works were not only philosophers and professional theologians to whom a work such as the *Platonic Theology* was addressed; however, the difference is not in the seriousness of the text, but rather in the more or less technical way he expresses his ideas. In *On the Christian Religion* Ficino puts forward some new ideas, and discusses religion not as part of a theological system, but rather as a phe-

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[41] On this point see Craven's important historiographical survey, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola…*

[42] Avery Dulles, *Princeps Concordiae: Pico della Mirandola and the Scholastic Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass. 1941); Giovanni di Napoli, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola e la problematica dottrinale del suo tempo* (Roma 1965).

nomenon central to man's nature, one which is represented in human historical development but also in the divine interruptions in the history of the world, through prophecies and miracles, the culmination of which is represented by the figure of Christ. His focus on the term "religion" enables us to regard Ficino as an innovator in the religious thinking of the Renaissance, since this term was used in most mediaeval contexts to refer to the religious orders (this can easily be seen from the way Giovanni Caroli used it in most cases, as presented in chapter one), while the mediaeval term used to express the more general notion was faith. What we have here is an overall approach to religion, that Ficino thought was fit to disseminate beyond professional readers (theologians or philosophers), especially since he discusses here also the crisis in religious institutions. In studying such a work it is not relevant to discuss the continuity of scholasticism, since scholastic views, and even the names of scholastic philosophers, are hardly ever mentioned. It should be mentioned, in addition, that the apparent scholastic continuity in different parts of Ficino's *Platonic Theology* should not be regarded as a case of simple or direct continuity. In these more technical parts, Ficino uses some of the scholastic accepted procedures of argument and presentation, but the ideas, the assumptions, the terms and conclusions are very different from those we find in scholastic thinking.

With regard to Pico, chapter four of this book will show that he does use scholastic literature and forms of argumentation, but only in his critical responses to the accusations of the theologians who were members of the papal commission, in order to demonstrate to them his competence in technical theological discussions and to refute their arguments on their own ground. But when he presents his own attitude to theology and religion, Pico uses a very different Latin style, and he also uses philosophical arguments which connect the skepticism of the ancient Academy, on the philosophical level, with faith and opinions which appear only in Scripture and in the primitive Church. This is why the "scholastic argumentation" found in both Ficino and Pico should not be dismissed as merely representing "scholastic continuity" but should be understood instead as reflecting a more sophisticated approach to this earlier tradition.

Also in regard to the new humanist theology, it is not enough for us to say that Ficino and Pico both created a humanist theology, as if they were engaged in the same enterprise. Humanist thinking has many aspects. What is common to Ficino and Pico is that they both emphasized the historical aspects in the development of religion, religious dog-

mas, and theology; in this they can be compared to Lorenzo Valla. But their approach to the Christian religion is completely different. Ficino brings into his discussions of the history of religion and religiosity Neoplatonic elements. Pico, at the time he wrote his *Apology*, emphasized (and in an even more explicit way than Ficino) Scripture and revelation as the true foundation of Christianity. Yet, when he explicitly discusses different theological viewpoints in scholastic philosophy, he does not propose to replace them with an alternative philosophical approach, but rather, he offers a critical examination of the positions of the theologians who wrote after the formulation of the Creed—Fathers and Doctors alike—according to the criterion of probability of the skeptical Academy.[43]

I would like to conclude this section by stating that my approach has been influenced by the views of the various historiographical schools, especially those of some followers of Garin. Nevertheless, I try to examine in a more detailed way some of the accepted terms which have not been analysed with sufficient care in the scholarly literature, as well as to lay stress on the differences which other scholars seem to have ignored, especially with regard to the influence of religion and theology, which have not been adequately analysed and interpreted in modern Renaissance scholarship.

a. *Some Historiographical Issues*

1. *Humanism, Religion and Theology*

It is an uncontroversial fact that almost all humanists were observant Catholic Christians, and that some of them held high offices in the church hierarchy. Ficino himself was an ordained priest, and at some stage he was a candidate for the cardinal's mitre.[44] It is also a fact that

[43] As will be shown in chapter four of this book, Pico specifically relates himself to this ancient philosophical school of which Cicero's *Academica* and Augustine's *Contra Academicos* are the main sources, and which is different from the mediaeval scholastic uses of probable arguments. For a discussion of probabilism and its origins in late scholasticism, see e.g., M.W.F. Stone, 'The Origins of Probabilism in Late Scholastic Moral Thought: A Prolegomenon to Further Study', cited in chapter one, n. 206. For a discussion of Sextus Empiricus' influence on the religious thinking of Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola see Charles B. Schmitt, *Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533) and his Critique of Aristotle* (The Hague 1967).

[44] On this issue see Peter Serracino-Inglott's article cited in n. 145 to chapter three.

a number of humanists wrote and published works of a theological nature—including the two works by Ficino and Pico which are the subject of chapters three and four of this book.[45] Yet it is still widely held among scholars that such preoccupations with religion and theology were marginal to the activities of the humanists as such, a mere carry-over from their past and education, and can be virtually ignored in assessing their new contribution to the spiritual life of Renaissance Italy.[46]

One reason for this attitude may well be the 'rational and secular' background of many scholars of the Renaissance in the last two centuries, which may not assist them in exploring the possibility of some deep religious experiences and of a serious interest in theology on the part of these humanists—even if, like Ficino, Pico, and some of the authors mentioned in chapter two, they wrote and published works of a religious nature. Such an attitude may also reflect the pervading influence of Jacob Burckhardt's classic *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*.[47] Burckhardt distinguishes very clearly between culture and religion, and treats religion as irrational and retrograde. His attitude to

[45] See Charles Trinkaus' discussion of Petrarch, Salutati, Poggio Bracciolini, Leonardo Bruni, and Lorenzo Valla, in his 'Italian Humanism and Scholastic Theology', in Albert Rabil, Jr. [ed.], *Renaissance Humanism*… vol. 3, pp. 327–348. See also John F. D'Amico's discussion of Manetti, Ficino, Giovanni Pico, Gianfrancesco Pico, Paolo Cortesi, Nicholas of Cusa, Erasmus, and others in his 'Humanism and Pre-Reformation Theology', in Albert Rabil, Jr. [ed.], *Renaissance Humanism*… vol. 3, pp, 349–379.

[46] It is important to cite here Trinkaus' general remarks in his 'Italian Humanism …' pp. 328–329: "On a primary defensive or apologetic level, then, the humanists reacted critically to attacks from clerical sources, some of which were monastic, and not mendicant or scholastic. But, as it seems to me, to stress only this conflict would be a very superficial way to deal with the problem of the relationship of humanism and medieval, especially scholastic, theology: for to begin with it leaves aside the positive reasons for the origins of humanistic consciousness. And, more importantly, it ignores the character of more mature humanistic thinking concerning the relationship of the *studia humanitatis* to the Christian religion, a faith to which they all adhered and which they wished to promote with varying degrees of fervor." See also Melissa Meriam Bullard's 'Renaissance Spirituality and the Ethical Dimensions of Church Reform in the Age of Savonarola: The Dilemma of Cardinal Marco Barbo', in Stella Fletcher and Christine Shaw [eds.], *The World of Savonarola. Italian Elites and Perceptions of Crisis* (Cornwall 2000), pp. 65–89. The analysis of Renaissance spirituality of the fifteenth century against the Protestant and post-Tridentine Catholic historiographies offered in pp. 65–70 is important also to the present discussion.

[47] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S.G.C. Middlemore (London 1945), pp. 292–296; and see also his *Force and Freedom—An Interpretation of History*, ed. and trans. James Hastings Nichols (New York 1955), pp. 165–166, 218–219.

Savonarola as an incursion of the dark Middle Ages into the enlightened Renaissance is but a typical episode in this treatment of the period.[48]

As I have already mentioned, a change in orientation was affected by three great scholars in the tradition of the 'School of Garin', whose works were published between 1970 and 2002. Each of them, in his own way, put to the test the assumption—which can be regarded as not unreasonable—that humanists who write works of religion and theology, especially if they present in such works new approaches to the very nature of religion and theology, do not do it as a by-work; and that their religious views should be investigated seriously rather than dismissed offhand in the name of some preconceived idea about the nature of humanism.

Charles Trinkaus studied mainly the religious writings and expressions in the works of Petrarch, Coluccio Salutati, and Lorenzo Valla, and coined for their religious views the term 'rhetorical theology'. Salvatore Camporeale, working mainly on Valla's attitude to religion and its history, called it '*teologia umanistica*'. John O'Malley, working on sermons delivered in Rome in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, coined for them the term 'Renaissance theology'.[49] All these names testify to a new kind of theology—essentially, to a new approach to religion, and especially to Christianity. I have chosen the term 'humanist theology' as more appropriate, since 'rhetorical theology' is somewhat

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[48] An example for Burckhardt's influence can be found, e.g., in Felix Gilbert's 'Florentine Political Assumptions in the Period of Savonarola and Soderini', in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 20, 3–4 (1957), pp. 187–214, especially p. 210; Gilbert tried to distinguish between a rational part in Florentine politics, on the basis of which politicians operated using reason, and an irrational element, in which concepts such as fortune or God penetrated into the area of political decision-making. But as I shall try to show in chapter five, such distinction derives from Gilbert's own assumptions about progress, rationality, and modernity, as forces opposed to religion, rather than from Florentine political practice and rhetoric in which religious and political terms are mixed together. See my critique of Gilbert's distinction in chapter five, n. 347.

[49] See n. 39 above. I hope to deal elsewhere with some recent critical accounts of humanist contributions to theological discussions such as John Monfasani's 'The Theology of Lorenzo Valla', in Jill Kraye and M.W.F. Stone [eds.], *Humanism and Early Modern Philosophy* (London 2000), pp. 1–23; and Chris Schabel's 'Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom: Auriol, Pomponazzi, and Luther on "Scholastic Subtleties"', in Russell L. Friedman and Lauge O. Nielsen [eds.], *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Moral Theory, 1400–1700* (Dordrecht 2003), pp. 165–189.

limited to sermons and similar works of a popular nature, and 'Renaissance theology' may include non-humanist approaches, such as the theology practised by scholastic contemporaries of Ficino and Pico.

In reassessing the importance of theology for these humanists, these scholars did not go the whole way: they avoided a number of pitfalls which would undermine their positions—or contradict the known facts. They rejected Burckhardt's sharp division between religion and culture,[50] as well as the sharp distinction between humanism, philosophy and theology drawn by Kristeller and his school, and took seriously the many sides and complexities of the humanist movement. They were also far from accepting the idea of secularization and secular culture as the hallmark of Renaissance culture. At the same time, they rejected some extreme views of paganism as a dominant element in the Renaissance.[51] Nor did they contend that humanists like Valla, Ficino or Pico attempted to create some form of 'Christian humanism', in which the new pagan authors discovered in the West during the Renaissance went through a process of thoroughgoing Christianization. They also avoided another pitfall—the attempt to detect in these humanists

[50] Trinkaus' words in his *The Scope*… introduction, p. xx, are important, though I have my reservations about his use of the term secular: "This is a matrix for the study of the self-consciousness of our period—not the assertion of a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, the cleric and the layman, the mystical and the rational which generated factions and multifarious parties, but a search for ways of trying to bring together and reconcile the apparently conflicting values. Let us propose that what was going on was a tendency to secularize the sacred while simultaneously sacralizing the secular." See also O'Malley's account in his *Praise and Blame*… p. 30: "But the irreligion of the Renaissance is a deeply imbedded prejudice. As late as 1969, for instance, Johannes Baptist Schneyer in his *Geschichte der katholischen Predigt* summarily dismissed all 'humanist' preaching during the Renaissance as doctrinally vacuous or even erroneous."

[51] For two very different approaches to "paganism" in the Renaissance see Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New Haven 1958; revised edition, Oxford 1980); C.M. Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford 1986). But see also Allen's detailed discussion and critique of Wind, regarding "the shadow" of Arianism in Ficino in 'Marsilio Ficino on Plato, the Neoplatonists and the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity', in *Renaissance Quarterly* 37 (1984), pp. 555–584; and Allen's critique of Woodhouse in *Synoptic Art*… p. 2, n. 3. I am thus in complete agreement with John Monfasani's opening sentence to his 'Platonic Paganism in the Fifteenth Century', in *Byzantine Scholars in Renaissance Italy: Cardinal Bessarion and Other Emigrés* (Aldershot 1995), pp. 45–61; see p. 45: "The pagan Renaissance is a historical cliché whose classical formulation we owe to the nineteenth century, but whose roots extend as far back as the seventeenth." See also his critical historiographical remarks with further references on pp. 45–47. See also Kristeller's general discussion of paganism and Christianity in his *Renaissance Thought*… pp. 66–81.

elements peculiar to the Reformation or to the Counter-Reformation. However much these movements may have been partially influenced by some writings of the fifteenth-century humanists, one should not analyse these humanists 'in retrospect', against a background which was very different from theirs, and lay in the future.

Humanist theology emerges from the writings of these scholars in all its complexity, especially as regards some of these humanists' attitude to their scholastic predecessors and to religion in general. The humanist theology of Ficino, Pico and some of their contemporaries—I shall maintain (always with close attention to their texts)—in no way rejects Christianity, not to mention religion in general. In its approach to Christianity and its theology, it employs a new language—humanist Latin—and new methods of analysis.[52] Instead of the 'timeless' arguments of the scholastics, which these humanists largely reject (or employ only in debates with scholastic contemporaries), these humanists look at religion as an aspect—the most essential aspect—of human nature, and discuss it in its various appearances in human history. Into this historical (in their sense!) picture, they incorporate elements from the pagan philosophical and theological texts newly discovered in the West. But they never dispute the truth, and the superiority, of Christianity as it was in the first few centuries of its history nor, by the way, do they dispute the authority of the Catholic church in principle. Indeed, they employ their historical and philosophical methods in order to reach back to what they regarded as a purer form of Christianity, as it was before the more recent centuries transformed it into a series of empty ceremonies and a collection of scholastic opinions.

2. *The Notion of Crisis*

In my analysis of the various texts, I shall be using the idea of a crisis—spiritual, religious and political—which is expressed by a number of Florentine humanists in the fifteenth century, and especially in its second half. In doing this, I shall be drawing on the achievements of O'Malley, Trinkaus and Camporeale, who will be discussed later in this section, and developing some of their insights on the basis of the texts I analyse. But first, let us clarify the notion of the crisis and its background.

[52] On this point see Ann Moss' *Renaissance Truth*… discussed in chapter four, n. 196.

A constant sense of crisis characterizes the last decades of fifteenth-century Italy; in that respect, it is not a specific crisis, but rather more general and widespread feeling which affected every aspect of life in the peninsula. This feeling can be found in many historical sources of that time such as chronicles, diaries, diplomatic documents, sermons, and speculative treatises. The political instability and tensions between the Italian states and leaders were both one of the concrete manifestations of, and reasons for, this sense of crisis.[53] Another was on the spiritual level: an increasing dissatisfaction with the institutional ceremonies and a deep need for a new approach to religion, for a new theology which could re-establish the relations between the human and the divine differently from the technical scholastic theology.[54]

The conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by the Moslem Turks, and their advance towards Western Europe, added to the sense of insecurity and misdirection. As I shall show in chapter two, some humanists (and not only humanists) regarded it as God's punishments for the recent sins of Chrsitendom.

These sins were obvious to everyone in the West. For forty years, 1377–1417, there were two claimants to the Holy See, the pope of Rome and the anti-pope of Avignon. This was finally settled by the Council of Constance in 1417. But its decision left open the question of who is the highest authority in the Western Church, the pope or the general

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[53] See Melissa Meriam Bullard, *Lorenzo Il Magnifico. Image and Anxiety, Politics and Finance* (Firenze 1994), especially chapter two. See the discussion and citation in chapter two, n. 5.

[54] See, e.g., Trinkaus' account of the spiritual or religious crisis in the fourteenth century in his *The Scope*… pp. 240–242. For Camporeale's account of the crisis in the contemporary theology, see his *Lorenzo Valla*… (1972) pp. 211–403; this detailed and technical discussion forms the essential background to chapter four of this book. For the evaluation of Camporeale's studies in general see 'Essays in Honor of Salvatore Camporeale', in *Modern Language Notes* 119, no. 1, supplement (2004); for evaluation of his studies on Valla see the articles by Melissa Meriam Bullard, Christopher S. Celenza, Brian P. Copenhaver, Mariangela Regoliosi, and Nancy S. Struever, in *Journal of the History of Ideas* vol. 66, no. 4 (October 2005), pp. 477–556. See also Francesco Petrarca, *Secretum*, ed. Enrico Fenzi (Milano 1992), p. 124, on the scholastics and their style: " … si ultra progrediare, silentium fiet, aut, si assiduitas disserendi verborum copiam audaciamque pepererit, mores tamen loquentis ostendent veram sibi rei diffinitae notitiam non adesse." On p. 128 Petrarch calls for a new theological language to replace the empty formulations of scholastic theology; see the citation in chapter one, n. 15. I am indebted to a graduate seminar held by the late Prof. Camporeale during 2002, in Tel-Aviv University, entitled "Petrarch's *Secretum*: The Crisis of Mediaeval Christianity and the Origins of Renaissance Humanism".

council—a question which was finally settled only in the council of Trent. Such a sense of insecurity did little to help the Roman church in its attempts to achieve unity with the Greek church, at the price of the latter accepting the overall authority of the pope.[55]

In Florence during the first half of the fifteenth century, the crisis is apparent in the work of two great reformers of the spiritual and religious life within the Church and the city-state: Giovanni Dominici and Antonino Pierozzi. Their followers in the second half of the century were Giovanni Caroli and Girolamo Savonarola. While there is an agreement between most scholars regarding a crisis in Florence during the 1490s, when Savonarola began to play a central role in Florentine politics,[56] it seems that scholars have not paid enough attention to the relation between the stormy events of the 1490s and an over-all spiritual crisis which can be identified in the historical sources during the decades before Savonarola. To some extent the Savonarola affair is related to the increasing tensions inside the Dominican Order between the Lombard local observant reform movement and its struggle for independent reform without the authority of the master general of the Order under a papal approval, and the master general and his supporters.[57] Savonarola in the early 1490s was a local reformer of San Marco, but very soon his reform programme received spiritual and political dimensions, far beyond the convent or the Order. If we go back to the early 1460s, we find already in the struggle between Giovanni Caroli, then the prior of Santa Maria Novella, and the master general of the Order Marziale Auribelli, described in Caroli's first composition which is discussed in chapter one of this book, a clear evidence for this institutional and authority crisis inside the Dominican Order. But Caroli brings these tensions to Florence and his account of the crisis is much broader. He is describing in fact a spiritual crisis which has both political and cultural dimensions. Caroli presents the institutions of the ancient Roman republic as a political model according to which the Dominican Order should be governed in a less centralized way. This should be related of course to the known Florentine republicanism, but nonetheless it connects between a spiritual and a political crisis. Ancient Roman authors, and especially Virgil, play a central role in Caroli's

[55] Joseph Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge 1959), pp. 16–17, 38, 49, 54.
[56] See, e.g., Stella Fletcher and Christine Shaw [eds.], *The World of Savonarola*…
[57] For the history of the Lombard congregation see chapter one, n. 8.

book, and present, together with the founders of the Dominican Order, an ethical-cultural model, deeply related to the *studia humanitatis* of his age.[58]

The crisis which is represented by Caroli resulted from the consciousness that mediaeval culture and institutions were in decline, while the features of the new civilization which would eventually replace it were not fully perceived. It was both the notion of discontinuity in regard to antiquity (on the historical and philological level) and the strong passion for ancient texts (on the cultural and psychological level) which stimulated this sense of a crisis.[59]

The analysis of the texts in the various chapters of this book will show that Caroli's account of serious tensions in his religious order—which he himself already sees also in political terms as affecting the whole body politic—is the first indication of a new sense of crisis. In the sermons in chapter two, and in Ficino's *On the Chritian Religion* in chapter three, I detect clear signs of a feeling of a deep religious and political crisis ("Iron Age", as Ficino has it, or "*diluvium*"—flood in the biblical sense—as we have in the sermons). The answer to this situation is—in some sermons—the Roman "*concordia*", a political term, and—in Ficino's book—a new and more direct and historical sense of religion and Christianity, and a new social structure, in which civil and religious powers should be united in one person, on the model of the biblical Melchizedek, regarded already in the Pauline epistles as a prefiguration of Christ. All these are clear indications of a deep feeling of impasse, both in religion and society, and the need for extreme measures rather than piecemeal reforms. Savonarola's

[58] On this issue see the studies of Camporeale on Caroli, cited and discussed in chapter one, nn. 4 and 5.

[59] For this deep aspect of the crisis see Nancy S. Struever, 'Historical Priorities', in *Journal of the History of Ideas* vol. 66, no. 4 (October 2005), pp. 541–556. Struever's comparison between Camporeale and F. Edward Cranz on pp. 546–556 is most important here; see, e.g., on p. 550: "What the historian gains is a very refined sense of the assumptions and strategies of the actual investigations of thought after AD 1100 no longer overlaid by recourse to the simplistic aphorisms of Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, and the like beliefs of the standard narrative, and thus avoiding the question-begging of the standard history of philosophy that employs these tags. The Cranz initiative also deploys a powerful sense of loss as innovation, and innovation as loss: a new hermeneutic tactic grows from frustration; affective conviction, as we see in Anselm, does not necessarily accompany logical success." And see F. Edward Cranz, *Nicholas of Cusa and the Renaissance*, eds. Thomas M. Izbicki and Gerald Christianson (Aldershot 2000); especially 'A Common Pattern in Petrarch, Nicholas of Cusa and Martin Luther' on pp. 151–167.

ideal of uniting religious and political power—"Christ is the King of Florence"—can be seen as a direct continuation of this trend; and it is no accident that Ficino was, at the start of Savonarola's reforms, one of his supporters. Thus I see a sense of crisis developing slowly but surely from Caroli, through early sermons of Ficino and some of his friends and pupils, to Ficino himself, to Savonarola. Pico, on the other hand, does not emphasize, in so many words, the feeling of crisis; but his demand to consider all theological opinions later than Scripture and the early Ecumenical Councils as equally a matter of mere opinion, to be reexamined as to their *probabilitas* (a term taken from the skeptical Academy), and sometimes reassessed against their historical background, is no less of a humanist solution to what is clearly a crisis of authority in theology. His solution is different in its essence from that of Ficino; but the feeling that scholasticism is no longer adequate, and that a purer and more original form of Christianity can be reached by a philosophical and historical examination of all theological views, is no less a humanist attempt to save Christianity by breaking with its recent theological past.

Having explained some basic aspects of the crisis which I trace in the various chapters of this book, I shall now relate my treatment of the crisis and of some aspects of humanist theology to those of O'Malley and Camporeale, on whose work I have based much of my own analysis of the crisis; but I shall also indicate where my reading of the texts has led me beyond their conclusions.

In his *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome*, John O'Malley analyses a large corpus of sermons delivered in Rome between 1450–1521 by preachers and friars with a humanist education.[60] He regards the style of these sermons as 'epideictic'—following the classical theory of rhetoric and persuasion—as against the mediaeval, and mainly scholastic, model, which he calls 'thematic'. The new 'epideictic' sermon relies, not on strict—and sometimes extremely complex—syllogistic and other types of logical arguments employed by the scholastics. It uses personal and communal examples from the past and present, relying heavily on history,[61] in order "to evoke sentiments of admiration, gratitude and praise, which in turn will lead to a desire for imitation".[62] While the typical scholastic sermon was meant to teach by argument—

[60] O'Malley, *Praise and Blame*… pp. 36–122.
[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

docere, probare, explicare, disputare—the new humanist rhetoric aimed at more concrete and factual persuasion—*imitari, admirari, gratulari, laudare*.[63]

I use some elements of O'Malley's model in my analysis of the sermons in chapter two and of Ficino's *On the Christian Religion* in chapter three. But I also point out the differences. Humanist theology does, indeed, use historical and metaphysical themes at the centre of its discussions of religion;[64] but Ficino's concept of history, and especially of the history of religion, is richer and much more consistent than the mere use of historical examples in a sermon, and the metaphysical arguments he employs are more consistent, and new. They are mostly taken from Neoplatonism, in the translation and dissemination of which he played a key role. Another difference is the issue of miracles, avoided by O'Malley's preachers in Rome.[65] In Ficino's historical account of Christianity, miracles are central to the story of the founding and early spread of this true religion. Persuasion and the use of history are thus, as O'Malley points out, central to humanist thought on religion; but the analysis of new texts (new in this context), shows the wide variety and complexity of uses of these methods.

This new rhetoric of persuasion, relying on history rather than on dry and formal syllogisms and refutations, is also relevant to Pico's *Apologia*. As will be shown in chapter four, Pico uses, in this work, two different styles, both in his use of Latin and in his manner of arguing. While refuting some of the scholastic points raised by members of the papal commission, he employs the Latin scholastic style, uses scholastic types of arguments, and refers extensively to scholastic literature. But when he presents his own approach to religion and his own suggestions as to how religious opinions should be re-examined, his Latin becomes humanist Latin, and his arguments are closer to those of the churchmen represented in O'Malley corpus of sermons, or indeed, in some of the sermons in chapter two of this book. Theological opinions are considered in their historical context; a type of ancient philosophy—Academic skepticism—which had only come to the fore recently replaces the dry logical conclusions and refutations—and unlike the typical scholastic, Pico does not try to teach or provide proofs, but rather to persuade his readers of the necessity for a new

[63] *Ibid*., pp. 70–71.
[64] *Ibid*., p. 62.
[65] *Ibid*., p. 69.

approach to opinions and doubtful dogmas, reached carefully and with an open mind.

In this context, one could add that much of what was shown by O'Malley in 1979 on the basis of his analysis of the Roman sermons had already been indicated and analysed by Camporeale in a long article—virtually a monograph—of 1976, dealing with Lorenzo Valla's *Encomium Sancti Thomae* of 1457.[66] According to Camporeale, Valla already presents a reaction against the 'decadent theology' of his contemporaries.[67] Valla was influenced by Quintilian's criticism of philosophy, and by his reduction of all philosophy to rhetoric.[68] In Camporeale's words, Valla argued that "la transposizione nell'ambito della teologia di un sistema verbale-concettuale, quello aristotelico in generale e metafisico in particolare, che per sua natura era semanticamente inadeguato, se non addirittura in antitesi, con il contenuto della rivelazione cristiana. Ma ciò che si è verificato con l'avvento della Scolastica, non è accaduto con la primitiva teologia patristica. I Padri, pur conoscitori delle lettere classiche e del pensiero greco, si sono rifiutati di adottare il linguaggio *metafisico* di Aristotele e di assumere la metodologia *filosofica*. Essi al contrario—ribadisce con insistenza il Valla—hanno assunto integralmente quel 'modus theologandi' che era stato esemplato nelle *Epistole* di Paolo".[69] Here we already find the demand for persuasion rather than arid logic and metaphysics. For Valla—as shown by Camporeale—patristic theology was a perfect system of Christian religion, while scholastic theology, represented by Thomas, "non hanno aggiunto che variazioni tematiche e formali, con l'assunzione della 'filosofia' classica all'interno del pensiero e del linguaggio dogmatico cristiano".[70] Scholasiticism, claims Valla, had its origins already in Boethius, who was already criticized in the eleventh century by Peter Damian for using the Aristotelian logical concepts of *possibile/impossibile*, *necessarium/contingens* (*De interpretatione* 9) to resolve the contradictions between free will and predestination.[71] This is the cultural context which Valla criticized in the name of a more historical approach. As Camporeale puts it: "La polemica valliana, quindi, veniva a collocarsi in un contesto storico-

[66] Salvatore Camporeale, 'Lorenzo Valla tra medioevo e rinascimento—Encomion s. Thomae 1457', in *Memorie Domenicane* 7 (1976), pp. 11–194.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[68] *Ibid.*, p. 51.
[69] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

culturale specifico e differenziato: da un lato, si poneva in antitesi al 'neo-tomismo' contemporaneo, come critica cioè ad una metodologia teologica ritenuta dall'Umanista romano ormai inadeguata alle nuove esigenze derivanti dalla prassi cristiana e dalla svolta della prima metà del '400; dall'altro, in opposizione alla linea boeziana dell' "aristotelismo" teologico che in Tommaso era giunto a valenza emblematica per la peculiare funzione ancillare assunta dalla *philosophia* nell'ambito della sacra doctrina."[72]

If—as I believe—Camporeale is right, some of the features which O'Malley discovered in certain fifteenth-century sermons also existed in a programmatic work by Valla of the middle of the century. In both cases, we have a departure from the scholastic past—in the case of Valla, a conscious and argued criticism of this past—and a new mode of doing theology.

This brings us back—but with some more background this time—to the concept of humanist theology and its contents.

3. *Humanist Theology*

Our discussion so far should indicate more clearly why I prefer Camporeale's concept of 'humanist theology' to Trinkaus' concept of 'rhetorical theology'. If we find some of the same features in both sermons of the period and a programmatic work by Valla—and I hope to show that these features reappear, in various degrees of concentration, also in the humanist texts I analyse in chapters two to four—then rhetoric is not inclusive enough. It may just do for Valla's *Encomium*, because of the influence of Quintilian. It may just do for the sermons in chapter two. It will not do for Ficino's and Pico's works analysed in chapters three and four, where philosophy and theology, not rhetoric, are at the centre of the discussion. O'Malley—who might have been more justified in using a concept like "rhetorical theology"—prefers "Renaissance theology". But as already indicated, this term is too inclusive. It may be taken to include the theology practised in the Renaissance by scholastic theologians. Scholastic theologians did not cease to act and write once humanist philosophy came on the scene. They continued to develop their own theology, often in response to the writings of the humanists. This theme of the contemporary—and later—scholastic responses to

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

humanist theology has not been studied with enough attention, especially in regard to many unstudied manuscripts, and I hope to study it in some detail in the near future. But the very existence of such a theology in the Renaissance makes the term "Renaissance theology", when one really refers only to the new theology of the humanists, rather misleading. Two other terms, used by some humanists, are 'poetic theology' and 'ancient theology'. The term 'poetic theology' came into use already in the fourteenth century, in discussions of the place and importance of poetry held by some humanists in response to the attacks on poetry by some scholastics.[73] Through the influence of Gemistos Plethon, Pico also planned a work interpreting ancient poetry on a Neoplatonic allegorical basis—but he did not live to write it.[74] 'Ancient theology', *prisca theologia*, was a concept which Ficino, and some other humanists, borrowed from the Neoplatonic tradition to designate pre-Christian, pagan theology, culminating in Plato. I shall discuss this term briefly, as far as my context requires it, in chapter three.

Most of the features of this humanist theology have already been indicated in our discussion so far, and they—and some others—will emerge from my close analysis of the texts. I shall point out again two features. One of them is the use of newly available classical sources—either Greek texts recently discovered in the West, or Latin ones which were scarcely read in the Middle Ages, and were suddenly copied in numerous MSS and read avidly in our period—in a discussion of the nature of religion, theology, and the history of Christianity. The Platonic and Neoplatonic writings, recently brought to the West in the fifteenth century, supply Ficino with his framework for the history of religion. For Pico, the basic instrument for a first, philosophical, re-examination of religious opinions are the concepts of *probabile* and *verisimile*, which he learnt (on his own admission) from the writings of the skeptical Academy surviving in Latin. Of these, Augustine's *Contra Academicos* was known to the Middle Ages, but never used to this

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[73] Trinkaus, *The Scope*… p. 26.

[74] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Commento dello illustrissimo signor conte Joanni Pico Mirandolano sopra una canzona de amore composta da Girolamo Benivieni cittadino fiorentino secondo la mente et opinione de' Platonici*, in Eugenio Garin [ed.], *De hominis dignitate, heptaplus, de ente et uno, e scritti vari* (Firenze 1942), pp. 546, 581; Trinkaus, *In Our Image*… vol. 2, p. 520; Chaim Wirszubski, *Bein H'ashitin* (Jerusalem 1990 [Hebrew]), p. 49. See also the same idea in Trinkaus' discussions of Bartolommeo della Fonte, in *The Scope*… pp. 64–65, 101, and his more general account in "From *Theologia Poetica* to *Theologia Platonica*" is in Trinkaus' *In Our Image*… vol. 2, pp. 683–721.

purpose. Cicero's Academic books were preserved in a small number of copies in the Middle Ages, but very few read them, and only in the fifteenth century—and mainly in Florence—they began to be copied and spread around Italy on a large scale.[75] Thus, newly discovered philosophical approaches began to play a more central role beside Aristotelianism—the dominant form of ancient philosophy used by the scholastics. In fact, Aristotelianism itself received during the fifteenth century a humanistic treatment.[76] This was not a mere change in philosophical opinions. This specific issue—the effect of all these newly discovered texts (Neoplatonic, Hermetic, gnostic, or skeptic in their orientation) on the religious and theological thinking of the humanists, and especially on Ficino and Pico, in terms of a specific spiritual crisis in the contemporary Christian world and in regard to the Christian tradition, the traditional theological questions, and the institutional and authority tensions—was not at the centre of the studies of Cassirer, Kristeller, and their students and followers. My argument here is very simple: if we accept the fact that religion in general, and the state of Christianity in the contemporary spiritual crisis in particular, were extremely important to Ficino and Pico, then, coming to grips with Ficino's notion of religion or Pico's attitude to theology and scholasticism are essential in order to understand their philosophies.[77]

Humanist theology—and some theologians who were not humanists, but came under the influence of humanists—also made use of examples and concepts taken from pagan ancient history in proposals for

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[75] For the Greek sources see Hankins' 'The Study of Greek in the Latin West' in his *Humanism and Platonism*… vol. 1, pp. 273–291; on the Platonic revival of the fifteenth century see pp. 282–284. For the Latin sources see Charles B. Schmitt's *Cicero Scepticus: A Study of the Influence of the Academica in the Renaissance* and Terence J. Hunt's *A Textual History of Cicero's Academici Libri*, cited and discussed in chapter four, n. 168.

[76] On the complex issue of Renaissance Aristotelianism see, e.g., Kristeller's *Studies in Renaissance Thought*… III, pp. 341–392. See also the discussion, with further references, in Brian P. Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford 1992; reprinted Oxford 2002), pp. 60–126; especially important for the present discussion are the remarks on p. 64: "Thus, although Plato was new and hence fashionable in many quarters, there was no exclusive commitment in humanist methodology or ideology to him or to any other ancient philosopher. Humanists with philosophical interests took Sceptical and Stoic as well as Platonist and Aristotelian positions. And since Aristotle's works were so numerous and influential, humanists from the early fifteenth century onward devoted considerable time and energy to making Aristotelian texts clearer, more precise, and more readable." And see Luca Bianchi, 'Continuity and Change in the Aristotelian Tradition', in James Hankins [ed.], *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge 2007), pp. 49–71.

[77] See the critical discussion of this issue in chapter three, n. 188.

the reform of society and politics. Caroli's struggle for *libertas conventus* against the tyranny (a concept he often uses) of Marziale Auribelli is discussed in chapter one. Caroli employs not only the Roman concept of *libertas*, but also a large number of examples for imitation from pagan antiquity, as well as some basic concepts taken from the political vocabulary of the Roman republic—in his proposals for the religious and social reform of the Dominican Order. In a number of cases, where we would expect him to bring examples and precedents—and concepts—from sacred history, we meet with ancient Greek and Roman examples instead, or with a mixture of biblical and pagan examples. We find the same tendency—sometimes with a clear statement that "we are the descendants of the Romans"—also in some of the sermons in chapter two. Caroli was, later in his life, one of Savonarola's main opponents. Yet I believe that both of them were deeply influenced by this political and civic aspect of Florentine humanism, which grew among humanists and people with some humanist education as a reaction to the Medici "tyranny".[78] In this particular respect, Baron's idea of a "civic humanism" may help us comprehend one of the features common to these two opponents, Caroli and Savonarola.

One feature of the humanist attitude to religion—and we shall find it both in Ficino and in Pico—is the demand for a strict separation between the human and the divine. This is not the obvious—and almost trivial—scholastic distinction between God's infinity and immortality and man's limitations and mortality. It is rather a distinction on the theological level. As I shall try to show in chapter four, a doctrine of right opinions was developed and considered suitable for the hegemonic scholasticism of Ficino's and Pico's day. The heretic was now a man who opposed this doctrine of right opinions.[79] The distinction between Scripture, the Creed, the decisions of the first Ecumenical Councils—and the opinions of Doctors like Thomas or Scotus became blurred. Humanists like Ficino and Pico—the first in his practice, the second more explicitly and methodically—attempted to redraw the line between dogmas which had full divine sanction and later opinions, which were disputable and subject to criticism and rejection. They—especially Pico—regarded this distinction as a means for purifying reli-

[78] Nicolai Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence Under the Medici 1434–1494* (Oxford 1966); for a more detailed discussion see chapter one, n. 18 (see especially the remark on Dominican republicanism) and context, and chapter two below.

[79] For this issue see chapter four, n. 5, and context.

gion and returning it as closely as possible to its pristine nature. In drawing this distinction, Ficino and Pico often rely on some of the earliest Fathers, such as Augustine and Origen, who were closer to early Christianity than the Doctors and later saints.

At the same time, both Ficino and Pico seem to believe—and hint to it or sometimes state it clearly—that this clear distinction between the human and the divine in matters of dogma and opinion is likely to help the Christian believer to get as close to God as one can get in this life. Sorting out real divine inspiration from the later dogmatic accretions will bring a man closer to the source of this inspiration. Here, perhaps, the mystical elements in humanist thought traced by Cassirer and Yates may give us some clue to what this inspiration and closeness to God may imply.

4. *Politics, Religion, Confraternities, and the Humanists*

As happens in the case of other ages and periods, historians of Renaissance Florence have tended to compartmentalize their research. Political and social history of our period have usually been studied in separation from culture and religion, as if they were two phenomena occurring in two different places.[80] But this is not the case of the two most important works on the Savonarola affair: Donald Weinstein's *Savonarola and Florence—Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance*, and Lorenzo Polizzotto's *The Elect Nation—The Savonarolan Movement in Florence 1494–1545*.[81] It is not mere coincidence that historians working on the Savonarola affair find it impossible to separate between political, social, religious, and intellectual history, since all these elements play their part in this affair. One particular victim of this separation are the lay confraternities which flourished in Florence in the second half of the *Quattrocento*.[82] They have usually been treated as a religious and cultural phenomenon, with no connection to the humanist culture which

[80] See, e.g., Gene Brucker, 'Savonarola and Florence: The Intolerable Burden' cited and discussed in chapter five, nn. 84 and 133. This separation is also present in some classic works on the political history of Florence; see e.g., Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence…*; Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini—Politics and History in Sixteenth Century Florence* (Princeton 1965).

[81] These works are cited in chapter one, n. 2 of this book.

[82] On the activity of the humanists in the religious confraternities in the Florentine context see especially Kristeller's 'Lay Religious Tradition and Florentine Platonism', in *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Roma 1969), pp. 99–122, and Ronald F.E. Weissman's 'Sacred Eloquence—Humanist Preaching and Lay Piety in Renaissance Flo-

was developing around them. One of the points of this book, which I have already discussed, is to break this compartmentalization. Life in Florence—or in any other city-state at that time—cannot be treated as if one aspect of it had nothing to do with other aspects. My argument here is both methodological and historical. Religion and religious matters are related to social, intellectual, and political aspects, but historians who work on archive documents do not always read speculative treatises and vice versa. As I show especially in chapters one and two, even religious and political terms are employed in the same context and with no distinction.[83]

The lay religious confraternities are a specific, and important, case of this tendency to separate and divide. Historians of the confraternities hardly refer to the humanists and to humanist culture. Two notable exceptions are the studies of Kristeller and Weissman cited above. I shall discuss these articles in more detail in chapter two below; but

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rence' cited and discussed in chapter two, n. 1. For some more accounts regarding the importance of the confraterities see chapter two, n. 3.

[83] According to Garin, Florentine humanism in the first half of the century was focused on civic matters and the *vita activa*, as can be seen in the role played by Salutati, Bruni, and Poggio Bracciolini in the Florentine republic; humanism in the second half of the century turned away from politics, since the Florentine republic was now ruled from the Medici palace; see Eugenio Garin, *La cultura filosofica*… p. 27: "Il centro della politica fiorentina si è spostato dal Palazzo dei Signori a casa Medici. Il cancelliere è un funzionario: non è più né un grande esponente politico né un gran letterato. La cancelleria si riempie di favoriti che cercano uno stipendio: i posti mutano secondo le esigenze della clientela di corte. La corte è presso Lorenzo: là vivono ormai, fatti cortigiani, anche gli intellettuali famosi." See also Garin's *L'umanesimo*… pp. 94–97. Garin's interpretation has been very influential until recent years; see, e.g., Christopher S. Celenza, *Piety and Pythagoras in Renaissance Florence—The Symbolum Nesianum* (Leiden 2001), p. 1: "The transitions in Florentine intellectual life in the waning years of the fifteenth century have not ceased to evoke historians' attentions. In the last two decades of the fifteenth century Florentine intellectuals and elites underwent what has seemed to some a wrenching intellectual and moral crisis. The humanist movement had matured and evolved into what was becoming a Europe-wide educational and intellectual ideal. In the city of Florence, the movement had grown increasingly more technical. If, early in the century, it had had an ideologically civic orientation, by the end of the century the movement had become more outwardly neutral ideologically, as Poliziano expanded exponentially the range of technical humanist philological expertise, and as intellectuals under the gradual Medici ascendancy ceased preoccupying themselves so efficaciously with the *vita activa*." As I shall try to show in this book, religious and political terms and images were inseparable in humanist theology and this was an essential feature of anti-Medician rhetoric in the years during which Florentine republican institutions lost their former power. This discussion is of course related also to Baron's thesis of civic humanism and his followers and influence. On this see Albert Rabil, Jr., 'The Significance of 'Civic Humanism'…'

it is relevant here to quote what Kristeller said on p. 121: "Yet the resulting picture of a fusion of ancient, medieval and modern elements would be quite in keeping with many other aspects of the Italian Renaissance, and the influence of the Italian religious traditions on Ficino's Platonism would be analogous to the influence exercised by the traditions of German and Dutch mysticism on the thought of Cusanus and of Erasmus. On the other hand, the role which Ficino's Academy occupied in the religious life of late fifteenth century Florence might account not only for its contemporary appeal but also for the influence it may have had in its turn on the religious literature, thought and associations of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. The present paper cannot do more than to formulate a hypothesis and to make it appear plausible on the basis of limited and insufficient evidence. In order to prove and to develop it further, some student of religious literature will have to make a detailed investigation of the sources, and to study the sermons and spiritual letters, as well as related branches of ascetic literature, composed in Italy between the thirteenth and sixteenth century".[84] I hope this book is a small step in this direction.

Historians of humanism usually ignore the confraternities, as if they belonged to a different world, not to the same Florence at the same period. As will be shown in chapter two—and I discuss there only a part of the evidence which is relevant to this book—humanists were active in the confraternities and delivered sermons to their members which were steeped in humanist culture. This connection between humanists and the confraternities also expresses the same sense of dissatisfaction with the existing religious order of things. The rapid growth of the confraternities was a popular response to the sense of crisis in institutional religion—felt, in a different manner, by members of the religious orders like Caroli and his predecessors. They gave ordinary citizens a manner of expressing communally their religious feelings in a way which the petrified rituals of the church no longer satisfied. It is no mere coincidence that some humanists, who were also dissatisfied with some of the traditional features of religious life, were invited to preach before the members of these confraternities, and that in some of their sermons they expressed new humanist ideals of religion and politics, in terms which make these two aspects of Florentine life inseparable.

[84] Kristeller, 'Lay Religious Tradition…' p. 121.

The case of the confraternities underlines the necessity to use more dynamic terms in describing and analysing the political and spiritual life of fifteenth-century Florence. (Garin's emphasis on a dialectical, rather than a solidified and compartmentalized, approach to the intellectual ferment of the fifteenth century is relevant here). One attempt to do exactly this is Richard Trexler's sociological model of rituals in public life.[85] Trexler believes that this model can explain the relation between Lorenzo de' Medici, the patron of culture and humanism, and the Dominican Savonarola. Both of them, each one in his own way, attempted to reform the very nature of rituals in public life. I mention Trexler's influential theory as an indication that some scholars have been aware of the need to connect, rather than separate and compartmentalize. But I preferred to focus in this book on the theology of Ficino and Pico, which created—each in his own way—a new kind of theology.

In Ficino's work, especially, the emphasis in this theology is not on a reformed set of rituals, but on a new and purified relation between the Christian and his God, based on a new notion of religion, on a new historical perspective of religiosity, on moments of direct revelation such as prophecies and miracles, and on an image of a priest who should be at once a philosopher, a religious and a political leader, Melchizedek, who should lead Christianity from its present Iron Age to a future Golden Age. Ficino explicitly relates his theological project to the cultural programme of Basil and Augustine.[86] Thus, he integrates the patristic theme of "borrowed wisdom" into his own humanist version of *praeparatio Evangelica*. Ficino's new synthesis was based on a wide collection of texts, where many newly discovered pagan and early Christian philosophical texts are added to the sacred and patristic texts. We should add to this the fact that Ficino conducts his new project employing completely new philological and historical methods discovered by previous humanists. The result was a new theology in which the ancient theologians are in agreement with each other on the most central problems. The latest of the ancient theologians, whether

[85] Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York 1980). See also Ronald F.E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York 1982). For a more recent discussion of the importance of rituals in Florentine sociaty, with further references, see Maureen C. Miller, 'Why the Bishop of Florence Had to Get Married', in *Speculum* 81/4 (2006), pp. 1055–1091.

[86] For a detailed discussion of these points see chapter three, nn. 67 and 68, and context.

pagans or Christians, already made use of the mysterious new doctrines of Christianity in interpreting Plato. Since the *praecipua mysteria* of the late Platonists are based on John, Paul, Hierotheus, and Dionysius the Areopagite, Christianity is the climax of both the history of religion and the history of philosophy. It is important to notice that Ficino's emphasis here is on the historical process and not on the mystical element. These are the new context, methods, and relationships in which we can clearly see the emergence of a whole new theology, very different in scope, contents, and emphases from the scholastic theology of the age.

Pico is apparently using the framework of a scholastic *disputatio*, set out as a series of questions, which he answers by drawing on the authority of various Church Fathers and Doctors. After all, the *Apologia* was aimed at answering the accusations of the papal commission. Yet, while employing what appears to be the accepted form of a scholastic disputation, he modifies it from within, not by trying to adduce valid proofs (*demonstrare*), but rather by recommending (*probare*) what he considers to be probable. In this manner, he adopts a position which he also explicitly expresses from time to time and which alters fundamentally the status of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. For him, they represent probable, but not necessary, opinions. His discussion is essentially historical, and sometimes even philological, and entails comparing and contrasting views from various sources, and developing critical stances on the basis of these comparisons. In effect, what we have here is a historicization of patristic and scholastic theology. Pico points out the confusion (from his point of view) between opinion and faith, and between error and heresy, characteristic of contemporary scholastic theology. In his view, this derives from a confusion between that which is necessary and that which is merely possible or probable—in practice, between principles of faith, which are based on the indisputable authority of Scripture, the first four councils and the Creed, on the one hand, and the later formulations in matters of faith and opinions of theologians, on the other hand. Here he seems to construct his own relatively new humanist theology solely on that which is necessary, accompanied by a critical examination of that which is merely possible or probable. All that is necessary as far as faith is concerned is Scripture, without additions or subtractions, and revelation, including the first four councils and the Creed. It is quite clear from Pico's discussion of the salvation of Origen—where he maintains that a special revelation is the sole criterion for determining whether or not Origen was saved—that for him

the decrees of binding Church councils were subordinated to revelation. This is what connects him, on the one hand, to Ficino, who bases his own humanist theology on moments of revelation such as prophecies and miracles, and, on the other, to the preacher and prophet Savonarola, who claimed to be subject to direct inspiration from God and who maintained that even the pope could err.

Altogether, the relations between humanists and religion in all its manifestations—professional theology, lay religious confraternities, and spiritual movements not directly connected with the Church establishment—need to be reconsidered in a more integrative light. In other words, we should not make clear-cut distinctions between all these elements. Giovanni Caroli, a central figure in the spiritual life of Florence throughout this period—with whom chapter one deal extensively—is an example of the complexity of this theme. He was often critical of the lay confraternities, and even of humanist culture; yet he had a humanist education, which deeply influenced his religious writings, and was on good personal terms with some of the humanists of his age. This dialectical attitude of a professional and traditional theologian to the new culture around him is in no way unique to Caroli. He is only a precursor of later theologians, many of them scholastic theologians, who react to the new culture, but at the same time absorb large elements of it in order to contend with it. But this is already beyond the present book.

5. *The Differences Between Ficino and Pico*

Historians of the intellectual life of the period have not always emphasized enough the differences between Ficino and Pico, who were regarded sometimes as two equal, and similar, representatives of humanism and/or philosophy in Florence in our period.[87] Both created a new type of philosophy—or, alternatively, both continued the scholastic tradition which was part of their education. I shall show in chapters three and four that, with all the basic features of humanist theology which they share, the result of their attempt to create a new theology are very different.[88] They both share a sense of crisis, and both feel that there

[87] E.g., Schmitt, '*Prisca Theologia*…' p. 219; Trinkaus, *In Our Image*… vol. 2, p. 753; Charles L. Stinger, 'Humanism in Florence', in Albert Rabil, Jr. [ed.], *Renaissance Humanism*… vol. 1, pp. 175–208, especially pp. 194–197.

[88] For this same line of pointing out differences, but from a completely different

is a need for a new, and purer, kind of Christianity. They both reject the scholastic approaches to the nature of religion. They are both influenced by newly discovered philosophies originating in pagan antiquity, and make use of them in attempting to constitute a purer theology. They are both deeply influenced by humanism and its various methods and disciplines. But here the ways part. Ficino, in his *On the Christian Religion*, offers a new historical picture of religion, and of the unique place of Christianity in it, based on newly arrived Neoplatonic texts, both pagan and Christian. He does not examine in detail any of the views and dogmas of the Doctors of the Church, but simply ignores them in most of his work, and, referring to some of the earliest (and more universally acknowledged) Church Fathers, offers a new model of Christianity and of Christian society, which have been briefly described above, and which will be analysed in chapter three on the basis of a close reading of the relevant parts of this work. Pico, on the other hand, is not concerned in his *Apology* with Church organization and other social phenomena, but mainly with the purification of religious opinions and beliefs. His mastery of scholastic philosophy—in which he was far more an expert than Ficino—enables him to show the theologians, in their own terms and modes of thought, how fragile and contradictory some of the scholastic dogmas and *sententiae*, even those of the most respected saints and Doctors, can be. In order to re-examine these opinions, he appeals, not to an ancient dogmatic philosophy such as Platonism (not to mention the Aristotelianism of the scholastics), but to the doubting and searching method of the skeptical Academy. Unlike some scholastics, who made use of doubts in order to strengthen some given dogmatic positions, as a mere part of the process of *disputatio*, Pico takes skeptical methods seriously, as a first, philosophical, step towards a thorough revision of theology.

The attempt to present both Pico and Ficino as practitioners of the scholasitc tradition—because both of them employ some scholastic terms and procedures—amounts to disregarding both the differences in their scholastic education and their aim in using such scholastic terms. Ficino's almost complete disregard, in *On the Christian Religion*, of references to scholastic texts is evidence for his attitude to scholasticism as far as the very nature of religion and Christianity is concerned. Some

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point of view, see Anna De Pace, *La scepsi, il sapere e l'anima—Dissonanze nella cerchia laurenziana* (Milano 2002).

hidden references to Thomas Aquinas' *Summa contra Gentiles* (the only scholastic text which we are expressly told in contemporary sources was studied by Ficino) in the *Platonic Theology* is, if anything, evidence of this position.[89] Otherwise, why have these echoes without express references? The apparently scholastic structure of some parts of the *Platonic Theology* is, again, not proof of a continuation of scholasticism as far as the philosophical contents are concerned. Ficino employs some forms of presentation known to traditional theologians, but in order to present a completely new theology and philosophy.

The same is true of Pico's frequent scholastic discussions in his *Apology*. As already explained, these form part of his debate with the members of the papal commission, most of whom were trained in scholastic theology. But when Pico expresses his own views of theology and the manner of reforming it, both his language and his ideas are new and different. The views of some of the greatest Doctors, including Thomas himself, emerge as mere opinions rather than a matter of faith. Pico was accused by the papal commission of being a heretic because he erred in regard to Thomas' opinion; this is why he had to argue against this accusation claiming that to err regarding Thomas' opinion is not the same as erring regarding the faith.[90]

b. *Some Remarks on Methods and Structure*

This book is based throughout on a close reading and analysis of humanist texts. As we all know, humanists were steeped in classical and, to a lesser extent, mediaeval culture and literature to a degree which is virtually impossible for a scholar today to achieve. They quote from pagan, biblical, patristic and scholastic sources, often from memory, and very frequently without mentioning their sources. No scholar today can track down all the sources of their quotations and hidden references with complete accuracy. Full references to as many of these sources as possible should be the task of critical and commented editions of these

[89] See Ardis B. Collins, *The Secular Is Sacred: Platonism and Thomism in Marsilio Ficino's Platonic Theology* (The Hague 1974). Collins' book had been used by the editors of the recent edition of the *Theologia platonica*; see Marsilio Ficino, *Theologia platonica de immortalitate animorum*, 6 vols., eds. James Hankins with William Bowen, trans. Michael J.B. Allen with John Warden (Cambridge, Mass. 2001–2006), vol. 2, p. 378.

[90] See the detailed discussion of this issue in chapter four, especially section two.

texts. As already indicated, such critical editions of the texts studied in this book do not as yet exist, and my aim has been to deal with certain themes rather than providing a full commentary even on the numerous passages I analyse.

Whenever I could identify a biblical, classical or patristic quotation or echo, I have done so. Yet sometimes humanists quoted from memory or incorrectly ascribed passage to the wrong works. One can then only note that this is the case. This is especially so with patristic texts—and a good case in point is a polymath like Augustine. Most humanists in our period read many more of Augustine's writings than most Augustine scholars are familiar with today; but precisely because of the unusually large volume of Augustine's literary productions, they made mistakes, and the modern scholar is often lost. Even worse is the case of scholastic sources. Pico, when he wrote his *Apology*, was still under the influence of his scholastic studies in Italy and in Paris. His knowledge of scholastic literature probably exceeded even that of many of the theologians of his day. Even some veteran students of the period today cannot attempt to compete with Pico in their mastery of scholastic literature, which, for them, is part of their historical research, while for him it was part of his immediate past and education. Wherever I could, I identified his scholastic sources; and in one or two places I have even showed that he used a scholastic text for a purpose different from that of original author. The rest will have to await the careful critical editions of these texts, which are—as recently indicated by Christopher Celenza—one of the great desiderata for those studying the Renaissance.[91]

The texts analysed in this book open with Giovanni Caroli's *Liber dierum lucensium*, written in the early 1460s, and end with Savonarola's activity during the 1490s.

Caroli's work, written in dialogue form, is the result of his dispute with Marziale Auribelli, the master general of the Dominican order at the time, as to the manner of reforming his own monastery of Santa Maria Novella, and the Dominican Order in general. But as already indicated, the solutions offered in this dialogue show that Caroli already established a relation between the internal state of authority crisis in his monastery and order and the general state of Florentine society and politics. The frequent use of pagan sources—sometimes when one

[91] Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance*… especially the introduction and chapter one.

would expect, from a friar and abbot, biblical quotations—is indicative of Caroli's wide reading and education in pagan Latin literature. The many examples from pagan antiquity used as models for church reforms, and the clear references to Roman Republican models in an attempt to reconstruct the monastery, all show the pervasive influence of the new humanist culture, and his republicanism originated from both the Roman history and biblical examples. Caroli yearns for the great past of his order—and he did write, in later years, biographies of some of the leaders of this Order in the past. But many of the basic elements in his attempted reconstruction of the monastery and order are taken from an older—and 'newer'—past: that of Greek, and especially Roman, antiquity. I hope to show this in greater detail in a critical edition of this work of Caroli which I have been preparing.

The sermons analysed in chapter two date from a cross-section of our period, from the 1470s to the 1490s. I have already indicated the importance of the venue of most of them, the confraternities, as an expression of the sense of crisis and the need for new answers, and also the importance of the relation thus established between humanists and these confraternities. In many of these sermons, we find in a more extensive and intensive manner the reliance on ancient pagan sources, and the harking back to models taken from Athenian democracy and the Roman Republic, which were already overshadowed in Caroli's work. The connection between the religious and political problems of the day is clearly emphasized both by the subjects of some of these sermons and by the frequent use of political terms in religious contexts and vice versa. I call this chapter—where humanists address a wider public—'humanist theology in practice'. What we find in a more consistent and philosophical manner in the theological and philosophical works is here imparted to a larger audience of citizens as part of their day-to-day reality.

The account of Ficno's *De Christiana religione*, in chapter three, should be considered as part of the ongoing effort to understand Ficino's early activity, that is from the mid 1450s to the mid 1470s. As Arthur Field and Christopher Celenza have shown, following Kristeller, Ficino in these formative years had close relations with four "scholastic mentors": Francesco da Castiglione (a theologian who probably taught him Greek), Antonio degli Agli (a Florentine prelate and eventual bishop of Volterra), Lorenzo Pisano (a Dominican theologian and friar who was canon of San Lorenzo and who is mentioned also by Caroli), and Niccolò Tignosi (a medical doctor and a professor of logic and Aristotelian

philosophy at the University of Florence).[92] Though three of these figures were professional theologians, they were already influenced by some new spiritual themes deriving from ancient Greek texts, and almost completely unknown to most professional scholastic theologians. For instance, Antonio Agli, in his *Explanatio symbolorum Pythagore* and *De mystica statera*,[93] treats Pythagorean symbolic mysticism and its Neoplatonic interpretation in relation to Christianity. This is enough to raise some questions, not frequently enough asked by scholars of Renaissance thought, about the relations between humanism and theology, humanists and professional theologians, *humanae litterae* and *sacrae litterae*. Asking why professional theologians would be interested in ancient Greek pagan texts is exactly the question with which an account of the new humanist theology should begin. So, for example, the well-known Neoplatonic notion of *prisca theologia*, an "ancient theology", revived by Gemistos Plethon a generation before Ficino, can also be seen as Ficino's justification, in response to his teachers, for continuing to study texts which were outside the scholastic *curriculum*.

Pico's *Apologia*, a text which has not been studied in itself as a theological work so far, is surely in need of a full critical edition—as do hundreds of Renaissance works, so many of which are extant only in manuscript. Any generalizations about such texts, even those which have been published in print, is in its nature lacking, since the evidence available to the world of scholarship is still extremely limited in scope.[94] My edition of Caroli's first written work will be a modest attempt to

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[92] Kristeller, 'The Scholastic Background…' especially p. 263, and see his important remark on pp. 273–274: "This scholastic element is Aristotelian rather than Platonic in character, and it is obviously due to Ficino's early training at the University of Florence. The specific sources of this element are difficult to verify as long as the philosophical and theological environment of fifteenth-century Italy is not more thoroughly investigated. For it is among the Italian scholastics of the fourteenth and the early fifteenth century that we have to look for Ficino's teachers, not among the philosophers connected with the French schools of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, who have so far attracted most of the interest of competent medievalists"; Arthur Field, *The Origins of the Platonic Academy of Florence* (Princeton 1988), pp. 129–174, especially p. 136; and Celenza's introduction to his *Piety and Pythagoras*… pp. 26–27.

[93] The first text has been edited in John Swogger's Warburg Ph.D dissertation: see Celenza, *Piety and Pythagoras*… p. 26, n. 97. The second, however, remains in manuscript: see chapter one, n. 12.

[94] See Arthur Field's preface to *The Origins*… pp. x–xi: "Many years ago I proposed a study of the early Platonic Academy as a dissertation topic, and I was told by a prominent Renaissance historian that I would be wiser to choose a subject less thoroughly studied. As I began to look at the texts, however, I started to have an opposite concern: I wondered how many of the sources for the early philosophical

narrow this gap in a very small measure. Yet even in this dismal situation, an analysis of Pico's *Apologia* as a work of theology is required, since I regard it as Pico's theoretical exposition of the rationale behind publishing, with no comments, his 900 theses. I also suggest that Pico published his *Apologia* as his contribution to the public debate suggested by his theses, which never took place.[95] Although Plotinus and Proclus figure largely in the theses, Pico is in no way a Platonist like Ficino, and it seems that he offers their opinions as yet more opinions to be examined. As already said, Pico makes extensive use of procedures of doubt and probability which he has taken from the skeptical Academy—the first time, to my knowledge, when the skeptical Academy is taken seriously in a discussion of Christian religious opinions and dogma. Pico himself admits the influence of the skeptical Academy on his thought in some documents written at the same time as the *Apologia.* But Pico is not 'just' a skeptical academic. As my analysis shows, he uses the procedures of the Academics only at the lower, philosophical level of examining opinions as to their greater or lesser probability. Pico is a Christian, and he accepts Scripture, the Creed and the dogmatic decisions of the first Ecumenical Councils as binding and of divine origin. The next stage in the examination of religious opinions is their agreement or disagreement with these sacred and irrefutable views. Probability may remain the only criterion only where these divine sources

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renaissance had even been *read* by modern scholars. I do not see how any reading of the notebooks of John Argyropoulos's lectures on Aristotle can yield the conclusion, repeated so often in the secondary literature, that he was actually a Platonist (or Plotinian) and not an Aristotelian, or how any reading, even a superficial one, of Donato Acciaiuoli's commentaries on Aristotle can support the widely held hypothesis that he was repelled by Platonic metaphysics. There have been a few studies of Marsilio Ficino's teacher of Aristotle, Niccolò Tignosi; but none has yet brought to light the one interesting autobiographical statement appearing in *all three* of his commentaries on Aristotle, that he had been a student of Paul of Venice. That Cristoforo Landino began to take a philosophical approach toward the Latin poets only from the Lorenzo period, that is, from the 1470s, appears in almost every detailed study of the literature of the Academy; but new manuscripts of his early lectures indicate that he was a Platonic allegorizer certainly in the 1460s, and probably even earlier." On Niccolò Tignosi see also David A. Lines, *Aristotle's Ethics in the Italian Renaissance (ca. 1300–1650). The Universities and the Problem of Moral Education* (Leiden 2002), especially pp. 192–220.

[95] Thus, this chapter will show that the debate between Pico and the scholastic theologians was not only on the rhetorical or literal level, and it cannot be described as a civil literary debate in contrast to the non-civil and more serious debates under the shadow of the Reformation; such description of the fifteenth century debate between humanists and scholastics can be found in Erika Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Harvard 1995), pp. 1–18.

are not clear and decisive—but in such a case, we are left in the realm of likely opinions. Thus, both Ficino and Pico make use of new—and different—philosophical approaches in order to reconstitute Christian theological thought. But the new theology they produce is still clearly Christian and Catholic.

The last chapter of this book is dedicated to the Savonarola affair, and since the historical and the historiographical background are discussed in detail in sections 1 and 3 there, no introductary remarks are required here.

CHAPTER ONE

GIOVANNI CAROLI—THE CONDUIT OF THE SENSE OF SPIRITUAL AND POLITICAL CRISIS IN FLORENCE

1. *Introduction. Giovanni Caroli and his Times*

In this chapter I would like to discuss both the spiritual and the political crisis in Florence during the last decades of the fifteenth century by referring to a relatively little known figure in the history of Renaissance Florence: Giovanni Caroli (1428–1503). I shall try to show that Caroli was a conduit of the sense of crisis that affected the intellectual life in Florence, through analysing his first composition, the dialogue in three books *Liber dierum lucensium*, which was written during the winter of 1461–1462 (but was finished only after August 1462) while he was in exile in the Dominican convent of St Romano in Lucca. Caroli thus presents us with the reactions to the impending crisis by a member of the Church and a friar, whose main concern is to deal with the problems of his own order. Yet even here we already find the pervasive influence of Caroli's classical education, and especially his acquaintance with authors such as Cicero, Livy, Tacitus, and especially Virgil. In some places, the classical allusions and quotations even precede the biblical ones, and sometimes we have only classical allusions where we could expect some biblical ones. A good example is given in the second page of the work, where the ruins of his monastery remind Caroli first of all of a famous passage from Virgil's *Aeneid* II on the destruction of Troy. Almost as an afterthought, Caroli adds that the prophet Jeremiah, also has something to say on the destruction of a holy city.

Caroli was a prolific author, who wrote biblical exegeses, a history of Florence, and polemical writings against Savonarola, Nesi, and Pico. He was deeply involved in both the religious and intellectual life of his time: he was elected three times as the prior of Santa Maria Novella, and was also active in the *Studio Fiorentino*, the University of Florence. He thus should be regarded as the most authoritative Dominican theologian in the city at that period. Nevertheless, none of his works has

been printed so far.[1] Caroli has been mentioned in several historical works over the years, but almost always as a part of another story or context.[2] Armando Verde's historical account of Caroli, in which he states that "la concezione classica della storia come sviluppo organico che riceve alimento rimane a fondamento della sua polemica antisavonaroliana",[3] echoes two articles by Salvatore I. Camporeale, focusing for the first time on Caroli himself and analysing his activity and importance to Florentine history between 1460–1480, in both a humanist and a religious context.[4] In these two articles Camporeale studied

[1] For biographical facts on Caroli, and a list of his works, see Stefano Orlandi, O.P., *Necrologio di Santa Maria Novella: 1235–1504. Testo e commento biografici*, 2 vols. (Firenze 1955), vol. 1, pp. 203–205, vol. 2, pp. 353–380. For a description of the manuscripts of Caroli found in the library of Santa Maria Novella see G. Pomaro, 'Censimento dei manoscritti della biblioteca di S. Maria Novella—parte II: sec. XV–XVI in.', in *Memorie Domenicane* 13 (1982), pp. 203–353, see especially pp. 237–240, 253–255, 274, 307–310. For more details about the library of Santa Maria Novella see also G. Pomaro, 'Censimento dei manoscritti della biblioteca di S. Maria Novella—parte I: origini e trecento', in *Memorie Domenicane* 11 (1980), pp. 325–470.

[2] Eugenio Garin, *La cultura filosofica*… pp. 224–225, mentioned Caroli's "occhio critico alle pagine 'oracolari' del Nesi, e se ammirava lo stile elegantissimo di Giovanni Pico, non ne accettava le conclusioni, e ne discuteva con l'amico Pietro Negro, dolendosi con lui dei tempi moderni, così travagliati." Donald Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence—Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance* (Princeton 1970), pp. 234–238, [see especially n. 22 on p. 234 for more biographical and bibliographical refrences to Caroli] is interested in Caroli's critique of Savonarola and his prophetic ambitions; much the same interest and context is at the centre of Lorenzo Polizzotto's *The Elect Nation—The Savonarolan Movement in Florence 1494–1545* (Oxford 1994), e.g., pp. 59–65, and his *La missione di G. Savonarola in Firenze* (Pistoia 1996), pp. 29–53, including an appendix with some passages from some of Caroli's polemical texts against Savonarola, in the vernacular, on pp. 47–52. Giovanni di Napoli in his *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola*… p. 144, mentioned and discussed Caroli's critique of Pico's *Theses*. Caroli's critique of Giovanni Nesi's *Oraculum de novo seculo* is discussed in Christopher S. Celenza's introduction to his *Piety and Pythagoras*… pp. 43–45. Caroli's Florentine history, *Libri de temporibus suis*, is discussed, but only as a source for Machiavelli's *Istorie fiorentine*, and with no proper appreciation of its inherent value, in Rab Hatfield's 'A Source for Machiavelli's Account of the Regime of Pietro de' Medici', in Myron P. Gilmore [ed.], *Studies On Machiavelli* (Firenze 1972), pp. 317–333, including an appendix with some passages from the *Libri de temporibus suis*, on pp. 328–333. Hatfield treates Caroli as a moralizing Dominican friar (pp. 322, 326–327), whose historical account "is not easy going, for Fra Giovanni's Latin is far from terse. And one doubts that the work has much to yield in the way of reliable information about Florentine political history during the period of Medici rule" (p. 327). These conclusions do not seem to be very reliable in light of the works of Camporeale (see nn. 4–5 below). I shall show some aspects of Caroli's awareness of history and historiography also in this chapter. Caroli's activity in the *Studio Fiorentino*, as well as a detailed account of his polemical writings, can be found in Armando F. Verde, O.P., *Lo studio fiorentino 1473–1503*, vol. IV (Firenze 1985), e.g., pp. 1288–1291, 1348–1361.

[3] Verde, *Lo studio*… p. 1290.

[4] Salvatore I. Camporeale, O.P., 'Giovanni Caroli e le '*Vitae fratrum S. M. Novellae*'—

Caroli during the first two decades of his activity, showing the complex relations between *humanae litterae* and *sacrae litterae* in two of his compositions, *Liber dierum lucensium* and *Vitae nonnullorum fratrum beatae Mariae Novellae*, and concentrating in particular on Caroli's philosophy of history in the *Vitae*, under the shadow of a religious crisis.[5]

In Caroli we can observe not only a recasting of many elements of mediaeval religiosity and a personal sense of the crisis common to his time, but also a detailed articulation of an intellectual malaise that would affect Florence in the final decades of the century. We can understand much about what happened in Florence at that time by focusing on the activity of two Dominican friars: Caroli and Savonarola, who represented two opposite points of view on religion and politics. But while Savonarola's activity has been studied intensively, especially in the last few years, Caroli remains in the shadows. The status of the Mendicant friar and the monastic life in Florentine public life, as well as the dichotomy between the active and the contemplative life, needs to be reconsidered in the light of Caroli's views.[6] I would like to make two points here, which I hope to substantiate in the rest of this study: first, that the crisis which afflicted Florence in these years had two inseparable aspects: spiritual and political; second, that humanist theology was a response to both aspects of the crisis. Consequently, a discussion of the crisis must precede the discussion of the evolution of human-

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umanesimo e crisi religiosa (1460–1480)', in *Memorie Domenicane* 12 (1981), pp. 141–267, including an appendix with Caroli's letter of dedication to Cristoforo Landino, his general introduction, and his seven introductions to each of the *Vitae*, on pp. 236–267; and his 'Giovanni Caroli—dal '*Liber dierum*' alle '*Vitae fratrum*' ', in *Memorie Domenicane* 16 (1985), pp. 199–233, including an appendix containing the third book of the *Liber dierum lucensium*, on pp. 218–233.

[5] Camporeale's other works on Caroli are: 'Giovanni Caroli, 1460–1480: Death, Memory, and Transformation', in Marcel Tetel, Ronald G. Witt, and Rona Goffen [eds.], *Life and Death in Fifteenth-Century Florence* (Durham and London 1989), pp. 16–27; 'Humanism and the Religious Crisis of the Late Quattrocento—Giovanni Caroli, O.P., and the *Liber dierum lucensium*', in Timothy Verdon and John Henderson [eds.], *Christianity and the Renaissance. Images and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento* (New York 1990), pp. 445–466; 'Mito di Enea e crisi mendicante—il *Liber dierum* (1460–1462) di Giovanni Caroli O.P.', in *Memorie Domenicane* 30 (1999), pp. 5–18.

[6] See Camporeale, 'Humanism and the Religious Crisis…' p. 462: "Caroli is not speaking here [in the *Vitae*] in terms of an opposition of the active with the contemplative life, or of religious vocation with marriage. On the contrary, the life of the mendicant friar is seen as active in the highest degree: a life in which contemplation is transformed and made concrete through action." I analyse the status of the preacher/prophet in Savonarola's sermons as the culmination of both contemplative and active life in chapter five.

ist theology. I shall try to show in this chapter that Caroli can serve as a good case study for understanding this crisis. He was, moreover, a professional theologian, deeply involved in intellectual activity, with personal relations to humanists and an interest in humanist themes. He thus took part in the new humanist theology emerging in Florence in the last decades of the *Quattrocento*.

Camporeale argued that "the fact that he [Caroli] began to write at all followed from his realization that he was experiencing a profound crisis in his own religious life. Out of this crisis, which he suffered in mature adulthood, came the first of his most important literary works…"[7] The notion of a religious or a spiritual crisis is, therefore, essential; and it is a dominant theme in Caroli's first two works. What, then, was this religious crisis? And why, while holding the post of prior of his convent, Santa Maria Novella, was he exiled to Lucca in September 1460? Camporeale reconstructed the historical background which led both to Caroli's exile and to his literary account of these events, the *Liber dierum lucensium*:

> In April 1460 disagreement and conflict surfaced between the community of Santa Maria Novella, of which Caroli was prior, and Marziale Auribelli, general superior of the order, regarding monastic reform and renewal. This was but a particular case of a more widely spread divergence of attitudes on how to implement the reform already begun by Giovanni Dominici in the early Quattrocento, which was to determine the development of the mendicant orders in Italy for the rest of the century. Caroli argued for a reform that would respect the juridical autonomy and specific tradition of the convent. Auribelli, instead, sought to impose a reform using the authority of his own jurisdiction as general superior, that is to say, with criteria quite unrelated to their local tradition. Despite the support of the Signoria of Florence, who agreed entirely with the convent's position, Caroli was removed as prior and exiled to Lucca in September 1460.[8]

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[7] See Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli, 1460–1480: Death…' p. 16.

[8] *Ibid*., p. 17; for a more detailed account see Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli e le '*Vitae fratrum*…' pp. 141–145. See also Celestino Piana, *La facoltà teologica dell' università di Firenze nel quattro e cinquecento* (Grottaferrata 1977), pp. 109–114. These stormy historical events which were part of the drama of the Dominican observant reform movement in Italy during the fifteenth century are discussed in R.P. Mortier, *Histoire des Maîtres Généraux de l'Ordre des Frères Précheurs*, IV (Paris 1909), pp. 387–402; Raymond Creytens O.P., 'La déposition de Maître Martial Auribelli OP par Pie II (1462)', in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* XLV (1975), pp. 147–200. A later stage of the dispute on the reform is discussed in Alfonso M. D'Amato, O.P., 'Vicende dell'osservanza regolare nella congregazione Domenicana di Lombardia negli anni 1469–1472', in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* XV (1945), pp. 52–101. The history of the Lombard congregation which

The immediate conflict was between the liberty of the convent and its autonomy, based on tradition and local history, to carry out a reform, and the authority of the general superior to impose a reform from outside. But the wider context was the religious crisis which had started in mid-*Trecento* with the Black Death and which had had a profound impact on all aspects of life, continuing into the next century. It is represented here by the widespread perception of the need for reform in the religious life of Dominican convents. Both the immediate conflict and the wider context of the religious crisis are present in Caroli's dramatic account. His own personal crisis consisted in the fact that, as a Dominican friar, he believed that he had to show a "heroic disobedience", in order to save his convent and preserve the *libertas conventus* which he had come to regard as analogous to evangelical liberty (on which see below). Obedience, the highest vow in monastic life, was now identified with a tyrant, Marziale Auribelli, and therefore had to be discarded. Such a rejection reflected a deep crisis in monastic life and in the Dominican Order, a crisis which was both personal and constitutional.[9] It is also important to note that because of the involvement of the Florentine *Signoria* in the religious reform of a Dominican convent and the involvement of religious reformers such as St Antonino, Caroli, and Savonarola in political issues, it is impossible to separate religious from political matters. In my analysis of Caroli's *Liber dierum lucensium*, I shall attempt to demonstrate that the crisis, along with the different proposed solutions to it, involved both religion and politics.

In considering the *Liber dierum lucensium*,[10] we may first ask, is it any surprise that a professional theologian like Caroli, with a traditional

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played an essential role in this drama is discussed in R. Creytens and A. D'Amato, 'Les Actes Capitulaires de la congrégation Dominicaine de Lombardie (1482–1531)', in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* XXXI (1961), pp. 213–306.

[9] These are some of Camporeale's conclusions regarding the first book of the *Liber dierum*: see Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli e le '*Vitae fratrum*…' pp. 150–156; e.g., p. 156: "Entro il dispiegamento dell'aporia obbedienza/disobbedienza, quale contraddizione massima dell'istituzione monastica, è contenuto dunque l'intero dialogo del *liber primus* 'dei giorni di Lucca'. Nella tensione massima tra gli estremi di questa contrapposizione, espressa dal confronto tra il francescano e l'agostiniano, si è fatta manifesta la problematica della crisi monastica." As will be clear from my analysis of this work, it is written in dialogue form.

[10] Caroli's autograph manuscript is MS Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Conv. Suppr. C.8.279, ff. 1^{r}–56^{v}. For a description see Orlandi, *Necrologio*… vol. 2, p. 362; Pomaro, 'Censimento…' (1982) p. 240. I am now preparing a critical edition

scholastic education, chose to write his first composition in the form of a dialogue? We should remember of course Augustine's continuous influence and inspiration upon theologians during the whole Middle Ages and beyond it, as well as the more personal style of theological treatises we find in monastic and pre-scholastic theology. But the answer regarding Caroli is also related to the changes in scholastic philosophical and theological discourse during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. It is important to notice that the critique against the rigidity and obscurity of many scholastic discussions in the manner of the disputed question or the Sentences commentaries began already among the scholastic thinkers themselves. Someone like Jean Gerson (1363–1429) for instance, used in some of his writings a more simple and personal style, which was addressed to uneducated readers and listeners, local priests and simple believers, who were interested in knowing some basic theological principles. Since Petrarch's *Secretum*, the dialogue form was identified also with the humanists.[11] But how many theologians with the same background as Caroli wrote dialogues? Apparently

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with an English translation and commentary notes of this text. I am using my own transcription for the first two books and the following *sigla*: ⟨⟨-⟩⟩ for words or phraces added in the margin or above the line; /-/ for words or letters deleted in the text; ⟨-⟩ is my own correction; and ¶ presents a new page in the MS. For book three I am using Camporeale's published transcription in his 'Giovanni Caroli—dal '*Liber dierum*' …' pp. 218–233, with some corrections and the same *sigla*.

[11] Francesco Petrarca, *Secretum*… p. 98: "Ego enim ne, ut ait Tullius, '*inquam et inquit* sepius interponerentur, atque ut coram res agi velut a presentibus videretur' collocutoris egregii measque sententias, non alio verborum ambitu, sed sola propriorum nominum prescriptione discrevi. Hunc nempe scribendi morem a Cicerone meo [*Tusc.* I 4, 8—Fenzi, the editor of this text, gives another reference, to Augustine's *Solil.* II 7, 14, cited by Fenzi in note 31 p. 291] didici; at ipse prius a Platone [*Thtt.* 143b8–c6: ἵνα οὖν ἐν τῇ γραφῇ μὴ παρέχοιεν πράγματα αἱ μεταξὺ τῶν λόγων διηγήσεις περὶ αὐτοῦ τε ὁπότε λέγοι ὁ Σωκράτης, οἷον "καὶ ἐγὼ ἔφην" ἢ "καὶ ἐγὼ εἶπον," ἢ αὖ περὶ τοῦ ἀποκρινομένου ὅτι "συνέφη" ἢ "οὐχ ὡμολόγει," τούτων ἕνεκα ὡς αὐτὸν αὐτοῖς διαλεγόμενον ἔγραψα, ἐξελὼν τὰ τοιαῦτα.] didicerat. Ac ne longius vager, his ille me primum verbis aggressus est." For Jean Gerson see Brian Patrick Macguire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation* (Pennsylvania 2005), e.g., pp. 37–40. For the influence of patristic theology see Irena Backus [ed.], *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West. From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, 2 vols. (Leiden 1997); see especially the influence on monastic theology in Burcht Pranger, '*Sic et Non*: Patristic Authoriry Between Refusal and Acceptance: Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux', in vol. 1, pp. 165–193; more relevant to Caroli are the discussions of Augustine's influence on later medieval authors in Eric Leland Saak, 'The Reception of Augustine in the Later Middle Ages', in vol. 1, pp. 367–404; and Charles Stinger, 'Italian Renaissance Learning and the Church Fathers', in vol. 2, pp. 473–510.

there were other cases.[12] Caroli himself gives us a clue for his own reasons for writing a dialogue in the prologue, when he described his exile as a transition from the collapse of the Dominican monastery in Florence, which he sees as the collapse of the *studia divinitatis*, to the *studia humanitatis* in his place of hibernation, Lucca:

> When this memorable and doleful ruin of our house and family had removed me from the city and driven me away into exile in Lucca, together with Iacobus Petri, who had barely escaped unscathed from the same ruin, we were very kindly and courteously received by the friars [and] spent all the winter season in literary studies.[13]

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[12] I hope to discuss this issue elsewhere. Here I can only give some details of what I beleive is an important subject which merits a detailed study. It seems that there were professional theologians at Caroli's time who wrote dialogues which reflect the same tension between *humanae litterae* and *sacrae litterae* that characterizes the new Florentine humanist theology. See e.g., Antonio degli Agli's *De mystica statera*, a dialogue between himself and Ficino, who was his student, in which "Antonius exhorts Fecinus to remember that Christian studies are to be placed before pagan studies", a text which still remains in manuscript: MS Naples BN VIII. F. 9, ff. 19–33; see Celenza, *Piety and Pythagoras*… p. 27 and nn. 99 and 100 there. Another professional theologian who was one of Ficino's early teachers, Lorenzo Pisano, wrote three dialogues, probably between the late 1450s and the early 1460s, entitled: *Dialogi humilitatis*, *De amore*, and *Dialogi quinque*, which are still in manuscripts; see Field, *The Origins*… pp. 158–174, see especially p. 162, and pp. 277–279; Pisano's critique of the monks in his *Dialogi humilitatis* mentioned by Field on p. 167 should be compared with Caroli's critique and reform of the monastic life, but such a comparison is beyond the scope of this book. Another example is Francesco di Tommaso, a Dominican of Santa Maria Novella, who in 1480 wrote a dialogue *De negocio logico*, which he dedicated to Poliziano, and in which he attempted to explain the problem of universals as presented in Prophyry's *Isagoge*. See Jonathan Hunt, *Politian and Scholastic Logic: An Unknown Dialogue by a Dominican Friar* (Città di Castello 1995). Francesco di Tommaso was a student of Dominique of Flanders and most probably also of Caroli. On Dominique see Léon Mahieu, *Dominique de Flandre (XV siècle) sa métaphysique* (Paris 1942); Armando F. Verde, 'Domenico di fiandra: intransigente tomista non gradito nello studio fiorentino', in *Memorie Domenicane* 7 (1976), pp. 304–321. The last example to be mentioned here is Giorgio Benigno Salviati, a Franciscan theologian who wrote mainly dialogues. On his life and works see Vasoli, *Profezia e ragione*… pp. 17–120.

[13] *Liber dierum*… f. 4^{v}: "Cum memorabilis illa flebilisque domus et familie nostre ruina mi/c/hi urbe excluso, Luce exilium detulisset, unaque mecum / esset / Iacobus Petri ex eodem vix exscidio liberatus ⟨⟨venisset⟩⟩ comiter et perhumane a fratribus excepti in studiis humanitatis tempus hyemale transegimus." Iacobus Petri de Florentia or Giacomo di Pietro was a professor of theology. He joined the Dominican Order in Ferrara under the influence of the preacher Bartholomeus Ferrariensis. After the death of Bartholomeus he returned to his fatherland and joined Santa Maria Novella. He became bachelor in the college of theology at the University of Florence in 1463, and then, in 1464, he joined the doctors of theology in the college. He was the prior of the convent in 1471; he then became governor and preacher of the *Ospitium* of Montelupo

It is important to notice that Caroli here specifically relates himself to the *studia humanitatis*. He chooses to discuss the crisis in the *studia divinitatis* and in the *vita monastica* not in the scholastic style of a *quaestio disputata* but rather in the style of a dialogue. He uses Virgilian imagery, combined with a historical sensibility and awareness, in his struggle for a solution to the crisis.[14] In order to discuss the spiritual crisis, it was necessary to adopt this style and form. Some hundred and ten years after Petrarch had attempted to show that the language of scholastic theology had lost its validity and had declined into empty formulae, with no emotional and spiritual meaning,[15] Caroli, the Dominican friar, signalled the same profound cultural break between scholastic and humanist theology. Both Petrarch and Caroli used the dialogue form which Cicero described in his letters[16] as Aristotelian, and which he himself used in his own philosophical dialogues. One of the features of this type of dialogue is that the author himself participates in the discussion and usually takes the lead. This form of writing is richer and more complex than most other prose forms, and it demands a very

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in 1476; he died there in 1479. See Orlandi, *Necrologio*… vol. 1, pp. 180–181; vol. 2, pp. 297, 303–304, 355, 607.

[14] See Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli, 1460–1480: Death…' pp. 26–27: "His awareness of the decline of the monastic and religious system, of its loss of historic purpose, and perhaps even of the end of an era, led Caroli to pass in review the century-long duration of that cultural, political, religious, and artistic complex which was the Florentine community of his order. His historiographical research appears to him as a journey into the shadow and darkness where famous men of the past are held imprisoned by the oblivion of the living. These seem to be awaiting liberation, to be brought back into the light. This is a descent into Hades in order to make deeds and ancient figures live again by telling the stories of their lives. The *Vitae fratrum* opens with the words: 'in has vitas describendas descendi'—just as Aeneas descended to the kingdom of the dead to talk with the ancestors and ancient heroes and thus acquire from the past the strength and inspiration to reconstitute a city for his Trojan people. This consciousness of destruction and death, which returns as a dream vision and dramatic dialogue with himself in the *Liber dierum*, becomes historical memory in the *Vitae fratrum*."

[15] Petrarca, *Secretum*… p. 128: "Hoc est igitur quod 'satis alte descendere' dicebam, non dum forte consuetudinis causa mortem nominatis, dum 'nil morte certius, nil hora mortis incertius' ceteraque huius generis usu quotidiani sermonis iteratis. Pretervolant enim illa, non insident." See also the general remarks of Kristeller in *Renaissance Thought* … pp. 85–105.

[16] Cicero, *Att.* XIII. xix. 4: "Quae autem his temporibus scripsi Ἀριστοτέλειον morem habent in quo ita sermo inducitur ceterorum ut penes ipsum sit principatus." On the revival of the Ciceronian dialogue in the Renaissance see David Marsh, *The Quattrocento Dialogue: Classical Tradition and Humanist Innovation* (Cambridge, MA 1980). But this revival of the dialogue form by professional scholastic theologians in the last decades of the fifteenth century, as we have seen in n. 12, still needs to be studied.

careful reading and analysis on different levels. It is not as complex and as dramatic as Plato's philosophical dramas.[17] At the same time, if the model is Cicero's version of the Aristotelian dialogues, one could expect to find even here not a mere series of historical, philosophical, and in the case of Petrarch and Caroli, also theological discussions, but also a sensitivity to the unique characterization of every figure in the dialogue. Caroli's choice of this literary model as a vehicle for theological discussions indicates that the sharp separation, sometimes found in some modern historical accounts, between professional theologians and humanists, does not do justice to the complexity of Caroli's personality.

Liber dierum lucensium is a dialogue, divided by the author into three books. The main participants, who are present in all three books, are Johannes (Caroli himself) and Jacobus, a friend of Johannes from Santa Maria Novella, who was exiled to Lucca along with him. In Book one, they are joined by two other friars who are visiting Lucca: Paulus, a Franciscan, and Franciscus, an Augustinian Hermit. They all discuss the fortunes of the Dominican Order in the light of what has happened to Johannes and Jacobus. Paulus represents the old order of things, and insists on complete obedience, even when the general superior of the order can be regarded as a tyrant. Franciscus replies to him and supports the position of Johannes, that disobedience to a tyrant can be justified, even if he is a Christian magistrate. It is noteworthy that most of the discussion is based on Scripture and the early history of the Church, although Johannes introduces already some classical references and citations.

Book two consists of a conversation between Johannes and Jacobus. Franciscus' support for Johannes' position was not sufficient to comfort him in his present situation. In most of this Book, Johannes and Jacobus try to console themselves by remembering the great men of the past of Santa Maria Novella. All of these great men are related to the history of the order in Florence. Great Dominicans of the past such as St Dominic himself, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas are

[17] See the dramatic and philosophical interpretations of some of the Platonic dialogues in Jacob Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's Meno* (Chapel Hill 1965); Ronna Burger, *The Phaedo: A Platonic Labyrinth* (New Haven 1984); Michael C. Stokes, *Plato's Socratic Conversations, Drama and Dialectic in Three Dialogues* (London 1986); Mitchell H. Miller, *Plato's Parmenides: The Conversion of the Soul* (Pennsylvania 1986); and Ivor Ludlam, *Hippias Major. An Interpretation* (Stuttgart 1991).

not mentioned. The emphasis here is on the local and personal crisis involving the two main characters of the dialogue.

Book three is very different, with Johannes virtually the only speaker, although his narration includes speeches by two other characters whom he saw in a dream.

Johannes was obviously not comforted by the remembrance of the great men of the past, and he went on reflecting about his conversation with Jacobus until he fell asleep and had a dream. His account of the dream includes a vivid description of the siege and destruction of the house, that is Santa Maria Novella. Afterwards, two of Johannes' predecessors, Giovanni Dominici and St Antonino, appear to him and deliver their own speeches. Dominici's speech is far from comforting. He insists on waiting for the grace of God. Antonino's speech is the turning point of the whole dialogue. He not only analyses the past, but he also offers some prospect for rebuilding the house. What is needed is, of course, a return to the traditional Christian virtues and to the learning which has always been the hallmark of the Dominican Order. There is nothing new in this. But the speech is also full of references and allusions to the history of republican Rome, with political and religious concepts and terms used in the same contexts. What Antonino seems to advocate is a new form of government for the order, in which, as in the Roman republic, magistrates should not have absolute power, but should consult assemblies of friars. This is very close to the model of the Florentine republic.[18] In this speech, we have the

[18] The theme of Florence the daughter of Rome is known since the first history of Florence, the thirteenth century *Chronica de origine civitatis*, which traced its origins to Roman colonization in the time of Julius Caesar. Republican Rome became the model of Florentine civic ethos during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and it is deeply related to the contemporary Guelfism and to both internal social tensions and external Italian politics; see Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence*… pp. 27–66. Baron in his *The Crisis* … pp. 61–64 emphasized the republican turn in the Florentine foundation story; see e.g., pp. 63–64: "About the time when Bruni in his *Laudatio* was jubilant that Florence was the offspring of the Roman Republic and not of a period when Rome began to obey emperors, Florentine humanists, studying the ancient sources, established in a fashion convincing to their contemporaries the exact historical conditions under which the colony on the Arno had come into being: it was the victorious Roman army under Sulla whose veterans had been settled in the area of Florence not long after the beginning of the first century B.C. The humanist to whom this work of historical reconstruction was chiefly due was Salutati, the chancellor, who arrived at the theory that Florence was founded by veterans of Sulla, by searching carefully in all classical sources for the early conditions of the Arno valley, in particular the information in the *Bellum Catilinae* of Sallust and in Cicero's second oration against Catilina." A detailed historical account of the *Chronica de origine civitatis* in the context of Florentine political

first inkling of a theological discussion conducted along humanist lines. The scholastics and most of the Fathers are almost completely absent from the whole dialogue. In the third Book, as a whole, the classical allusions and the reliance on classical models replaces the scholastic fashion of relying on theological authorities. Antonino's speech is the final accord of the whole dialogue. Antonino was Caroli's teacher and mentor, who ordained him as a priest. He was, in addition, the model which Caroli followed in attempting his own reform of the monastery. It is not unlikely that Antonino's speech represents Caroli's response to his own crisis, but this response appears to have wider implications.

So far only Book three has been published in Camporeale's article mentioned above. It is for this reason that I have chosen to discuss Caroli's work book by book and to analyse some of the main points

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though can be found in Nicolai Rubinstein, *Studies in Italian History in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. I. Political Thought and the Language of Politics. Art and Politics*, ed. Giovanni Ciappelli (Roma 2004), pp. 1–41. The important modification we have in Caroli's description is that this Roman republican model is represented here as a model for governing a religious order. It is important to notice here that Caroli too wrote a *laudatio* for Florence, according to Bruni's model. See Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli e le '*Vitae fratrum*…' p. 186, and the text on pp. 239–244. The dedication letter to Cristofero Landino on pp. 237–238 reveals his relation to the Florentine humanist, and more generally, to the humanist fashion in Florence. Caroli's many anti-tyrannical remarks (and especially Antoninus' speech which contains Caroli's own solution to the institutional crisis in the Dominican Order in Book three) should change our notion regarding the so called Florentine 'civic humanism', so that it would include also figures like Caroli, representatives of a religious republicanism in Florence. Caroli should be regarded as a representative of a moderate version of aristocratic republicanism according to the classical model of Leonardo Bruni, and thus supporting the Medici regime; Girolamo Savonarola on the other hand should be regarded as a representative of a more extreme version of popular republicanism, influenced by biblical and early Christian models, but also by the *Ciompi* revolt of 1378 and its lasting and influential memory on Florentine politics during the whole of the fifteenth century, and used also by some of the political rivals of the Medici family. The history of republican tendencies among Dominican friars and among members of other religious orders in fifteenth-century Florence (and in the broader context, of the relations between humanism and scholasticism) is still to be written. On this political background, with further references, see John M. Najemy, 'Civic Humanism and Florentine Politics', in Hankins [ed.], *Renaissance Civic Humanism*… pp. 75–104. Thus, both Caroli and Savonarola should be regarded in the context of Dominican republicanism in Florence, started by the end of the thirteenth century and the early decades of the fourteenth century, with thinkers like Ptolemy of Lucca and Girolamo dei Remigi. See the discussion and the detailed critical remark with further references in Ronald G. Witt, *'In the Footsteps of the Ancients'. The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden 2000), pp. 62–65, and especially n. 78 on pp. 63–64.

by examining a number of representative passages. I intend to present a fuller account of the work as a whole in the edition which I am preparing.

2. Liber dierum lucensium: prooemium *and Book One*

Caroli states right at the beginning of his work that it contains *deplorationes*, or laments, for the present situation.[19] The word *deplorationes* expresses Caroli's despair at, and his strong criticism of, the dire spiritual state of his times. The cause of these laments is a certain *novitas* which took place around 1460 and involved matters related to the religious, that is, to members of the religious orders, who were accused by many of ignorance and of sickness of soul.[20] This *novitas* seems to refer to the reform of the monastic life which was imposed on the monastery by Auribelli. Yet we should not forget the reform which Caroli himself tried to carry out in his monastery and which was the cause of his exile. He thus says that he will defend another reform which he initiated.[21] This issue raises the problem of authority and of obedience/disobedience: the same Auribelli, the master general of the Order against whom Caroli as the prior of the Florentine monastery struggled and because of this was exiled to Lucca, has lost the support of pope Pius II and was deposited from his office in the general assembly of the Dominicans held in Siena in August 1462.[22] Caroli does not, however,

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[19] Caroli, *Liber dierum*… f. 1^{r}: "Continet autem deplorationes praesentium temporum." Note that he laments not merely his own personal fate, but the entire epoch. In the passage quoted in the next note he connects, once again, his own situation with other things which have happened *nostra aetate*.

[20] *Ibid*.: "Quoniam ea novitas, quam attulit nobis sexagesimus annus, longe omnium quae nostra etate religiosis acciderunt, memorabilis fuit, plurimos autem non defuturos arbitror, qui vel ignoratione rerum vel egritudine animorum nostros accusent." *Ignoratio rerum* is also mentioned in Antoninus' speech in Book three f. 55^{r} (see n. 227 below) and is related there to a bad kind of unity, which should in fact be regarded as ignorance or disregard or just indifference with regard to the state of the Order. This was already implied in the opinion of Bartholomeus Texerii mentioned in book one, f. 4^{r}.

[21] *Ibid*.: "Eapropter ut res omnis in aperto sit, iure a me suscipienda, ac maiorem in modum defendenda videtur, qui eidem non solum interfui sed etiam prefui novitati."

[22] *Ibid*.: "Eo vero id maxime faciendum institui, quo illum tandem Senis, generali magistratu eiectum, nec sine Pii pontificis maximi auctoritate, contuiti sumus, contra quem constat per nostros tam severe pugnatum." In these last two sentences we have clear echoes of the stormy events which were at the historical background of this dialogue. The master general of the Dominican Order Marziale Auribelli arrived twice at Florence: in April and in September 1460. These visits were related to the reform plan

accept the first verdict of both the master general and the pope against him in this matter, and therefore he intends to defend his position in this dialogue. He claims that disobedience to the iniquity of tyrannical power is justified.[23] Putting up with such tyrannical impiety makes a man lifeless and forgetful of his condition.[24] Caroli is clearly implying that in this case it is right to resist such an authority.

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in the Dominican Order led by the pope Pius II. During his second visit he removed both the provincial prior of the Roman province (to which the monastery of Santa Maria Novella in Florence belongs) and the prior of Santa Maria Novella from their offices, but still, he does not seem to have succeeded in his reform plan in the Florentine monastery, and thus, he was replaced by Bartolomeo Lapacci de' Rimbertini, who seemed to be more successful. Auribelli was then removed from his office in a most exceptional way by the pope and in August 15, 1462, in Siena, the general assembly of the Dominicans elected Corrado d'Asti to the office of the master general. See Pius II Piccolomini's own description of these events in Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *I Commentarii*, 2 vols., ed. Luigi Totaro (Milano 1984), vol. 2, pp. 1940–1944. See also Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli e le '*Vitae fratrum*…' pp. 141–147, 152–161. It is important to notice that Caroli is writing this dialogue, or at least this proem, already after the general assembly held in Siena in August 1462, in which his great enemy Marziale Auribelli was deposited from his office by the pope. But this fact does not seem to improve Caroli's feelings with regard to these events. Although there is a personal aspect here, Caroli is much more concerned with the serious problems of the spiritual crisis and the required reform. The unclear future of his Order is the reason for his concerns and pains, and he does not celebrate the fall of his enemy. Since three years later, in 1465, Auribelli was going to return to power and to be reelected, Caroli's attitude seems to be justified.

[23] *Ibid.*: "Tyrampnicam nichilominus rabiem, et principis hostilem et perfidia plenum animum quoquo modo effugisse, quis nisi mentis inops vituperet? Proinde et Spoletani tantae crudelitatis in heroes, ultro miseremur et indignimur. A Sic⟨⟨ulis⟩⟩/iliensibus / autem in gallos confectas, iure ipso laudamus." Caroli emphasizes here that tyranny is a political regime and behaviour against which one always should struggle in reality. While we may sometime feel pity because of some cruelties, we should not feel pity for the French who now suffer because of their tyrannical behaviour at the hands of the Sicilians. It is interesting how the internal tensions in the Dominican Order are here reflected in national terms: the Sicilians against the French. While Auribelli and some of his supporters are represented by Caroli as French, one of Auribelli's main opponents was a Sicilian friar: Salvo Casseta of Palermo, an inquisitor in Sicily who in August 17, 1462 sent a letter to pope Pius II asking to replace the general inquisitor of Sicily Henri Luguardi (who most probably was appointed by Auribelli) and criticizing him for being absent and thus for not fulfilling his office properly. Casseta was later accused in the general assembly of the Dominicans held in Avignon in 1465 (in which Auribelli returned to power and was elected again the master general of the Order) for his intrigues and responsibility for what happened in Siena three years before and for offending the liberty of the Order. For the whole picture of these events see Creytens, 'La déposition…' especially the letter by Casseta on pp. 195–196, the document regarding him and Piero Ranzano on pp. 198–199, and the decision against him cited in n. 115, on pp. 176–177.

[24] *Ibid.*: "Quid enim aliud est tyrampnicam impietatem, equo animo pertulisse, nisi aut exanimem hominem, aut sue conditionis immemorem effecisse?"

The analogy between Auribelli's authority, approved by the pope, and the unjust authority of a tyrant is obvious and has political, as well as religious, implications. In most Florentine chronicles written in the last decades of the *Quattrocento*, tyranical power is identified with the Medici and their allies.[25] The dichotomy we usually find in these

[25] See, for instance, the notes on servitude which Alamanno Rinuccini began to write in 1434, which are discussed in chapter two below. For another chronicle see Piero Parenti, *Storia Fiorentina*, ed. Andrea Matucci (Firenze 1994), the first volume of which covers the years 1476–1478 and 1492–1496 and ends in March 1496. The rest of Parenti's chronicle, up to May 1498, is published by Josef Schnitzer [ed.], *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte Savonarolas*, 4 vols., (Munich and Leipzig 1902–1910), vol. 4, pp. 114–285. For other chronicles see Luca Landucci, *Diario Fiorentino*, ed. Iodoco del Badia (Firenze 1883); Bartolomeo Cerretani, *Storia Fiorentina*, ed. Giuliana Berti (Firenze 1994); Iacopo Nardi, *Istoria della Citta di Firenze*, 2 vols., ed. Lelio Arbib (Firenze 1838–1841); Giovanni Cambi, *Istorie di Giovanni Cambi cittadino fiorentino*, 4 vols., ed. I. di san Luigi (Firenze 1785–1786). Nardi, for example, presents the political tension between republicans and anti-republicans as deriving from the social conflict between the aristocrats (*de' nobili, de' grandi, delle famiglie*), who were politically active and anti-republican, the middle classes (*il popolo grasso*), who were opposed to the aristocrats and thus pro-republican, and the lower orders (*il popolo minuto*), who represent the common good of the republic but who usually did not participate in politics except in times of crisis. The Medici obviously belong to the first group; see Nardi, *Istoria*… vol. I, p. 2: " … e tutti questi insieme erano indifferentemente chiamati per le superchierie che egli usavano nella città e contado, nobili, grandi, e di famiglia, ed erano parimente odiati, e contrarii e oppositi nel governo della repubblica, e nelle altre loro operazioni a quella parte che si diceva il popolo grasso. Perciò che 'l popolo minuto, o vero la plebe non interveniva mai nel governo, se non una sola fiata, usurpandoselo violentemente: come a suo luogo si dirà." He also highlights the contrast between the 'de' Medici' and the 'popolani', that is, those who were identified with the liberty of the city or with the common good of the people; *ibid.*, p. 41: "Nel medesimo tempo Lorenzo e Giovanni fratelli, e figliuoli di Pierfrancescoi di Lorenzo de' Medici, i quali erano in corte del re, essendo liberati dall'esilio, tornati in Fiorenza, fecero levar l'arme delle palle della facciata delle case loro, ed in qual luogo porre l'insegna e l'arme propria del popolo, la quale è la croce rossa nel campo bianco: e così lasciando il cognome de' Medici, per pubblico decreto, come singulari amatori della libertà, si fecero chiamare Popolani." Cambi called Lorenzo a tyrant; see Cambi, *Istorie*… vol. 2, p. 1: "A dì 12 daprile 1480 que' Ciptadini, che ghovernavano in questo tenpo, de' quali ne' era chapo Lorenzo di Piero di Choximo de i Medici, che s' era fatto tanto grande più degli altri ciptadini, che si può chiamare Tiranno, era d' età d' anni 28…"; *ibid.*, p. 65: "E anche questo fu notato da qualchuno, che pareva significhassi qualche rovina a quella Chasa de' Medici, perchera in cholmo; perche detto Lorenzo di Piero di Coximo de' Medici sera fatto chapo di detta Ciptà, et Tiranno, piu chesse fussi stato Signore a bacchetta. …" Parenti also focuses on the contrast between Lorenzo and Piero de' Medici, on the one hand, and the repulic and the liberty of Florence, on the other; Parenti, *Storia*… p. 23: "E' Principali intra di loro divisi si vedevano: chi molto era intriseco a Lorenzo, e aveva il governo nelle mani, forte se n'attristò, riputando doverne abassare, e forse perdere lo stato; chi non così era intinto, e dal canto suo del governo netto, più presto se ne rallegrò, stimando la repubblica doverne riavere la libertà e loro uscire di servitù"; *ibid.*,

chronicles is between tyranny or tyrannical power, always seeking to pursue private interests, which in most cases are contrary to the common good, and the republic or republican power, which supports the common good of the citizenry. Caroli himself presents here an interesting version of this same dichotomy. In the introduction to his biography of Alexius Strozzi written in October 1478 he contrasts contemporary merchants with those of the Middle Ages, maintaining that the former do not act politically for the safety of their country but only for their own benefit.[26] Thus, it seems that both the unrestrained merchant and the tyrant act against the common good and are interested solely in their own private good. By doing so, Caroli claims, they are threatening the state and the social order. What happens, then, if a merchant of this type gains political power and becomes a tyrant?[27] It is possible

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p. 125: "In tale modo, per la sua temerità, Piero de' Medici lo stato, anni 60 durato fino dal suo bisavolo, perdé, e libera la città rimase più per opera di Iddio che delli uomini, la città la quale con tanto animo l'arme per la libertà sua poi prese, quanto mai popolo alcuno si vedessi."

[26] Quoted in Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli e le '*Vitae fratrum*…' p. 257: "Itaque, omnia sua in edificiis conferentes multa aureum milia inprudenter muris committunt, que, si negociationibus applicarent, et sibi et ceteris omnibus plurimum commodi et utilitatis afferrent. Age vero, quod superbus ille apparatus in tectis, et in civitate et agris, haud nisi summa impensa et sumptu quam maximo fieri vel conservari potest, nec absque iniuria et oppressione multorum. At antiquorum tanta solertia et probitas fuit, ut et domum in urbe honestam et ruri sue conditioni parem habere curarent, nec regias domos nec tam variam superlectilem postularent. Quanta etiam in victu luxuria sit, satis inpromptu est. Quis namque dabitur, qui non se famulo pedissequa, varioque vestium apparatu aratioque—ut dicunt—panno, convivio splendido, frequentibus conpotationibus cotidianaque refectione domi non se existimet dignum? Ergo Metellos plurimos, Scipiones Maximos Pompeiosque multos domi habemus. Mallem autem Fabritios, Decios vel Camillos aut Curtios, qui se pro patrie salute ingentibus periculis obiectarunt. Proinde optimates omnes, quilibet vero civitatis primarius est, ac quisque summis in civitate viris semet arbitratur merito comparandum. Hinc igitur omnium labes et confusio rerum progreditur, hinc civitatis ordo omnis ammittitur, quem in vario personarum genere positum esse scimus; hinc iurgia, hinc dissensiones, hinc civiles discordie, ad extremum hinc profecto intestina oriuntur in civitatibus bella." Note the use he makes of examples from Roman history. Others regarded the two Scipios and Fabius Maximus as great men: see chapter two below, section two of the first part. Caroli himself, when it suits him, quots Ennius' famous lines on Fabius: see n. 170 below; he also cites the Scipios as a positive example, along with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle: see n. 42 below. Here, however, he draws a clear distinction between the plain and sturdy heroes of the earlier generations of early Roman history, and even the most distinguished leaders of the late republic. The motive of the virtuous and parsimonious earlier Romans, in contrast to the luxurious way of life which started with the conquest of the East, is a commonplace in Sallust, Livy, and Horace.

[27] Landucci, *Diario*… p. 3, states that Cosimo was known as the great merchant: " …Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici, el quale si chiamava tutto 'l mondo el gran mer-

that Caroli was influenced by this kind of language in the chronicles, and that his use of the word tyrant may have been an implied criticism of the growing power of Cosimo de' Medici. As we shall see, the notion of a republic, for which ancient Rome is the paradigm, is also mentioned later in the *Liber dierum* and identified with an ideal image of the Dominican Order and the Florentine state. What is important to keep in mind is that the terms 'tyranny' or 'republic' play their part in both religious and political contexts.

Caroli then goes on to defend his position in relation to *ea novitas*, and to criticize an event which happened in his time and which had an impact on all aspects of life.[28] He compares his situation, and the situation of his order, to the destruction of Troy, as described by Virgil; and he also draws on biblical quotations and imagery taken from the prophet Jeremiah.[29] But while the prophet saw with his own eyes what he described—he saw both *color optimus* and how it changed into *obscuratum aurum*—it is easier for Caroli to describe the destruction, since

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cante, ch'aveva le ragioni per tutto l'abitato; non si poteva fare maggiore conparazione che dire: e' ti par essere Cosimo de' Medici: quasi dicendo: che non si poteva trovare el maggiore ricco e più famoso…"

[28] Caroli, *Liber dierum*… ff. 1r–1v: "Ceterum eam rem michi sepenumero, diligentius intuenti, molestissimum est in hec tempora incidisse, cum non egregie facta, sed impie, sese ingerunt describenda, nec ut par fuerat alios accusandi, sed cau ¶ [1v] sam dicendi, seque defendendi, locus offertur. Tedet itaque hominum, tedet et morum, et si verum fateri velim, non nunquam tedet et vite, ubi non gloriose, ut quondam sed impie vivere, quibusdam permissum est." Note again the more general context of *haec tempora*.

[29] *Ibid*., f. 1v: "Adeo illa priscorum patrum sanctimonia destituti concidere plerisque ut recte familie nostre ruinas, eisdem versibus, quis poeta noster, Troiana excidia in Hectorea similitudine, flebat, deplorare possimus:

> Heu michi qualis erat, quantum mutatus ab illo
> Hectore qui rediit, exuuias, indutus Achillis
> Vel Danaum Frigios iaculatus puppibus ignes.
> Squalentem barbam, et concretos sanguine crines
> Vulneraque illa gerens, que circum plurima muros
> Accepit patrios, ultro flens ipse videbar. [Vergilius, *Aen*. II, 274–279, with variations]

Sed et sanctissimus vates, obscuratum aurum optimumque colorem, lacrimosis, querebatur vocibus inmutatum [Lam 4, 1: "Quomodo obscuratum est aurum mutatus est color optimus"], cuique sancte civitatis, dirui muros, iuvenes ense prosterni virgines captivas conduci, fanaque omnia violari, egerrime conspexisset." For the last few expressions I cannot find exact parallels in the Vulgate. Caroli is probably summing up images from Lamentations in his own words. Notice that the loss of *priscorum patrum sanctimonia* and the ruin of *familia nostra* are described first of all in the verses of *poeta noster*, Virgil. The quotations from Jeremiah are introduced almost as an afterthought: *sed et sanctissimus vates*.

he himself learned the exellent morals of the previous generation more through hearing about them than through seeing them:[30]

> For I came on the scene in these times which are not all that remote from our traditional customs. Since if I were to see that it happened otherwise, surely death would have been more pleasing to me than life. Reading the fathers of the past is moving, listening to [them] is moving, but the sight of [them] is most moving of alll.[31]

Caroli describes a crisis which is occurring in his own day. The consciousness of a certain painful difference, but also of a pleasant proximity, between the previous and the present generation produces this sense of crisis. Living in a later generation would be worse than dying, since this sense of proximity would disappear. The next generation would live entirely without this feeling. But Caroli not only read his illustrious predecessors, he was also well acquainted with the one whom he considered to be the last great figure of the previous generation: Archbishop Antonino Pierozzi who died in 1459, one year before *ea novitas* and Caroli's exile—the reasons for this composition.

Caroli is aware of the fact that he documents matters which concern the religious orders; he therefore explains what sort of events he considers worth documenting. For him, everything should be documented, especially things which are impious and profane, since they are very useful as negative examples for those to come.[32] History and ethics are thus inseparable, as they were for the ancient classical historians.

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[30] *Ibid.*: "Quo michi levius et perferendi et tollerandi ratio praesertim summenda est, quod magis auditu quam visu superioris etatis egregios mores acceperim."

[31] *Ibid.*, ff. 1^{v}–2^{r}: "Incidi enim in ea tempora, que parum a nostris moribus distant. Quod si secus accidisse viderem, gratior profecto mors michi quam vita fuisset. Movet / q / quidem veterum patrum lectio, movet auditio, sed ¶ [2^{r}] visio maxime." Notice *ea tempora* again. The connection between *tempora* and *mores* is as old as Cicero, *Cat.* I, 2: "O tempora! O mores!". One may also mention Livy, *Praefatio* 9: "… ad illa mihi pro se quisque acriter intendat animum, quae vita, qui mores fuerint, per quos viros quibusque artibus domi militiaeque et partum et auctum imperium sit; labente deinde paulatim disciplina velut desidentes primo *mores* sequatur animo, deinde ut magis magisque lapsi sint, tum ire coeperint praecipites, donec ad *haec tempora* quibus nec vitia nostra nec remedia pati possumus perventum est." This is echoed by Tacitus, *Agricola* 1: "Clarorum virorum facta *moreque* posteris tradere, antiquitus usitatum, ne *nostris* quidem *temporibus* quamquam incuriosa suorum *aetas*, omisit…" History was regarded as a source for ethical examples also by most historians in the Middle Ages; but what we have here are clear echoes of well known ancient Latin sources.

[32] *Ibid.*, f. 2^{r}: "Et quamquam religiosorum gesta, nisi sint plurimis documento futura, non videantur, litteris aut memorie commendanda tamen cum quid memoratu dignum acciderit etiam si impium ac sceleratum sit, minime pretereundum censeo. Nam et si id private fortasse infamie sit, publice ni/c/hil⟨o⟩minus utilitati, profuturum arbitror,

Caroli contrasts the fathers, the religious, and the brothers—that is, the different ranks in the Dominican Order—with kings, rulers, and tyrants, to the detriment of the latter.[33] The life of the friars and their oath represent not only religious virtue, but also political virtue. He contrasts the past, in which prayers (*orationes*), the study of Scripture (*litterarum studia*), and sacred customs (*sancti mores*), had protected the house, with the present, in which guards (*stationes*), suspicions (*suspitiones*), vigils (*vigilie*), foragings (*discursiones*), and even weapons (*prope modum arma*), were needed for protecting the house.[34] Just as in the case of the friars' virtue, we find here that the injustice (*iniquitas*) not only affects members of the religious orders, but all good citizens.[35] It is both religious and political injustice. In this most defective of ages, Caroli claims, not only do debtors demand what they themselves owe, but, far worse, people who should themselves by right suffer all manner of punishment, have

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cum hos pro male compositis rebus, perpetuo / sio / signatos illos vero divino iudicio vel punitos vel certe probatos posteri quoque cognoscent." See for example Livy, *Praefatio* 10: "Hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri; inde tibi tuaeque rei publicae quod imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu foedum exitu quod vites"; Tacitus, *Annals*, III, 65: "Exequi sententias haud institui nisi insignis per honestum aut notabili dedecore, quod praecipuum munus annalium reor ne virtutes sileantur utque pravis dictis facisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit."

[33] *Ibid.*, f. 3^{v}: "Ad hoc accedit quod ea spe freti, insolentissima licentia, omnia fedent nullique libidini aut voluptati indulgeant cuncta sibi ac suis licere et expedire, presummant cum nos ipsi, nobis ora obstrusimus, cum linguas abscidimus, cum vincula pedibus manibusve nostris iniecimus. Quo fit ut tum maxime remedia adhibere velimus, cum in nos campi (ut aiunt) tantum acceperint ut erunpendi aut effugiendi nullo pacto potestas fiat. Licet autem eam diligentiam et in rebus gerendis circumspectionem, semper conferendam putem, habenda tamen ratio hominum est atque discretio. Itaque ut patres ut religiosos postremo ut fratres cum venerint, non ut reges ut dominos utque tyrampnos suscipiendos censeo. Nec omnes mores nostros aperiendos nec quevis minima deferenda, et maiora si fieri queat et debeat raro ne nostrum illis gladium postmodum pugnatius ⟨⟨ultro⟩⟩ dedamus. Magis autem ea ipsa per nos melius et salubrius vindicanda curabimus ne plus in nos tandem possit au/c/toritas aliena quam nostra." The combination *reges, domini, tyranni*, in classical Latin, is wholly negative.

[34] *Ibid.*, f. 5^{r}: "Quis enim tantis furiis existimasset hominum animos agitandos ut ea domus quam orationes quamve litterarum studia quamve sancti mores custodire solebant, nunc stationes, nunc suspitiones, nunc vigilie et discursiones ac prope modum arma custodirent?"

[35] *Ibid.*: "Quis tam manifestis iniquitatibus humanas mortalium mentes [Verg. *Aen.* I, 462] crederet consensisse. Quis denique superum providentiam iustitiam vel equitatem tam impia permisisse concederet? Et tamen ita res acta est ut nil hominum nostrorum memoria meminerit actum fuisse iniustius. Gravis proinde fuit ea res, his qui proscriptiones qui vincula qui pecuniarum mulctationes pertulerunt, gravis fuit toti civitati, gravis bonis omnibus."

been appointed judges to preside over the trials of the just.[36] In such a crisis, even the image of the Stoic sage is not enough, since knowledge concerning the salvation of souls and the causes of all things does not release Caroli from his suffering and pains, caused by his human weakness.[37]

Jacobus tries to comfort Johannes by reminding him of other crises in the past and of the powerful opponents they had faced in their struggle for reform in the present.[38] He uses some very strong expressions (*iniuria, violentia, impietas*) and images (the *Halani*—a very warlike Scythian nation) in describing the acts and behaviour of their opponents, including the pope himself together with other powerful figures in the Church (*pontifices*), and, of course, Auribelli. By means of such language and imagery Caroli criticizes what had happened and expresses his unwillingness to accept the authority of both Auribelli and the pope, since they won the battle not by means of justice (*non iure*), but only through their power and authority. The implication is that without justice, authority has no meaning. Indeed, using authority unjustly constitutes weakness—just as more external instruments and weapons bring less real protection to the house. All this points towards a spiritual crisis.

Jacobus mentiones the support which he and Johannes received for their reform from certain Florentine political authorities, but he prefers

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[36] *Ibid.*: "Vidimusque hoc nequissimo tempore, non creditores, at debitores, repetere ⟨⟨vel exigere⟩⟩ que aliis ipsi debuissent, et quod intollerabilius fuit, non nullos omni ⟨⟨fortasse⟩⟩ pena iustissime afficiendos perspeximus iudices in iustorum causas fuisse constitutos." The last sentence is a clear reference to Auribelli.

[37] *Ibid.*, f. 5^{v}: "Sat enim ille quid nobis conducat ad animorum salutem omniumque rerum causas et rationes optime ipse novit. Ceterum cum humani simus neque ad illam vel dificilem vel simulatam Stoycorum sapientiam pervenerimus qua passiones ab animo sapientis disseperant, durare diu non possumus quin humane angamur et doleamus. Cum igitur his cogitationibus / incredibiliter corpore et/ animo perturbarer ita ⟨⟨ut⟩⟩ sepissime nec a lacrimis temperarem forte me pre ceteris eo die suspensum inveniens…"

[38] *Ibid.*, ff. 5^{v}–6^{r}: "⟨Jacobus:⟩ Quid totiens tuis cogitationibus premeris? Credis ne his perturbationibus que facta sunt retro reditura? Nonne et superiori seculo multa legimus similia contigisse? Anne nos tue cogitationes arce ammissa auxiliisque fugatis victores constituent [Echoes of Ennius, *Andromacha* 97–98 (Warmington), from Cicero, *Tusc.* III, 44]? Aliis artibus mi/c/hi crede opus est si vincendum arbitremur. Victi quidem sumus, non iure, sed iniuria, sed violentia, sed impietate. Neque vero cum hominibus. At cum Halanis, cum pontificibus, ad ultimum cum auro bello [word play on Auribelli] nobis certamen fuit. Quid ergo mirum si cessimus? Nec Rolandi potentia adfuit nostris nec Papae opulentia defuit quam eis qui nos impetebant, ¶ [6^{r}] quis auxiliis ne modo nostri sed et amplissimi populi vincerentur."

to keep the controversy within the house.[39] For the same reason, he advises Johannes not to continue with this controversy, while emphasizing the personal aspect of the crisis and the price he (Jacobus) himself had to pay, in order not to bring more harm on himself than his enemies have menaged to cause. He encourages him to focus on prayers.[40]

Johannes does not, however, accept Jacobus' advice. In his reply he mentions and praises Baptista Fabrianenses, a Dominican professor, who showed contempt for public opinion or for reputation. Johannes approves of his opinion and regards it as best, especially for members of religious orders.[41] He then compares Baptista to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Scipios.[42] It is interesting that Caroli chooses to mention classical rather than Christian models, while we would expect a theolo-

[39] *Ibid.*, f. 6^{r}: "Et quoquam momento quidem Magistratus ac Cesar steterint pro nobis non tamen / ille / perpetuo nec ille verus fuit, licet quoad vixerimus, et illis gratiam habituri simus. Plus autem profuit illis qui ex familia bonitatem ad se redire facit, quam nobis vel Soderinus T vel Petruccius C cum in magistratu essent." For the correspondence between pope Pius II and the Florentine *Signoria* (between June and November 1460) on the required reforms in Santa Maria Novella see Piana, *La facoltà…* pp. 110–114. These documents confirm Caroli's historical account. Tommaso Soderini (1403–1485) was a famous Florentine politician. He was among the innermost circle around Cosimo de' Medici, and was a prominent follower of his son Piero. Cesare di Domenico di Tano Petrucci was member of the *Signoria* in July–August 1461, when Tommaso di Lorenzo di messer Tommaso Soderini was *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia*. I would like to thank Prof. Lorenzo Polizzotto for helping me with these identifications.

[40] *Ibid.*: "Itaque longe consultius puto modum perturbationibus istis ponamus ne plus mali nobis ipsi quam adversaris faciant inseramus. Si enim dolendum est quis magis in hac re permoveri deberet quam ego qui domo eiectus dignitate exutus, egreque gravatus nullo in loco certus consisto?"; *ibid.*, f. 6^{v}: "Et ideo bene feceris si ad eas orationes animum applices ad quas te cum Prati essemus sepe numero adhortatus sum. Eritque ea res tibi solatio nobis vero ac posteris utilitati."

[41] *Ibid.*, ff. 6^{v}–7^{r}: "Siquidem Baptistam Fabrianensem ordinis nostri ac facultatis excellentissimum professorem dicere solitum ⟨⟨aiunt…⟩⟩ Nil hisce / nis / diebus maioris dementie fore quam libros novos efficere. Ni/c/hil enim esse indictum. Magisque ea re honori detrahi hominis ac fame quam illi quoque accedere asseverabat. Quippe hec ex illo, alia vero ex altero accepta proclamant utque vulgo fertur nec illius esse farinam dicunt. Quo fit ut famam exquirentes in infamiam incida ¶ [7^{r}] mus. Quam quidem optimi ac prestantissimi viri sententiam ita probo ut ni/c/hil probabilius homini presertim religioso afferri posse existimem. Hec enim aliorum magis au/c/toritati concedit quam sue, et inanem ac fugacem huius seculi famam ut fumum leviter evolantem despicit et contempnit fecitque homo justissimus quod ante verbis predixerat. Nam in ipso suorum studiorum decursu mox preter omnium spem cum prope quinquaginta annos esset natus ex hac luce subtractus est."

[42] *Ibid.*, ff. 7^{r}–7^{v}: "Vidi ego tum hominem adolescens videram et puer tum Florentia transiret ad fatales aquas tanquam Socratem vel Platonem aut Aristotilem aut alterum Scipionem tanta inerat homini ¶ [7^{v}] vel gravitas in disputando vel facilitas in soluendo vel acuitas in pervestigando vel comitas in amore omnium contrahendo."

gian like him to give preference to examples from sacred history. But in fact, he is representing here a new model: a combination of a professional theologian and humanist, who combines *liberales artes* and *religio omnis*.[43] This model reveals the influence of humanists on professional theologians such as Caroli. It shows the complex relations and mutual influences between these two groups of intellectuals. It is important to note that Caroli lays stress on these two aspects of Baptista's activity. This awareness and emphasis indicates the essential difference between mediaeval and Renaissance culture. For Caroli, Baptista also signifies a traumatic break with the past. The memory of Baptista reminds Johannes of his own times:

> He [Baptista] lived in much better and happier times than we ourselves live. There are so many troubles and confusions among men of the present times and they are so bitter that I would believe that nothing is more frustrating, nothing is more disturbing, nothing, finally, more horrible, than the life of these men. Therefore, indeed he [Baptista] rests, while we, the remnants, are agitated by the iniquities of the times, and we live a life which is almost more unhappy than any other death.[44]

We find here again the contrast between a golden age of the past and the present, which is in the midst of a spiritual crisis. The emphasis here is on the concrete presence of this crisis, which is right before our eyes, so that we are witnesses to its consequences and implications. The contrast between past and present is also shown by the difference between Baptista who rests (*quiescit*), and us, who are agitated (*quatimur*). The present dire situation which Caroli describes has, in his view, three aspects: 1. It is part of a series of crises which started long ago; 2. When good men like Baptista were magistrates, they took care of the

[43] *Ibid.*, f. 7^{v}: "Homo certe omnium sua etate doctissimus ac iustissimus et pro cuius decessu nec liberales artes nec religio omnis lacrimas continere debuerant." Baptista de Fabriano was lector in Bible and substitute lector on the Sentences in Bologna between 1426–1428, bachelor in Padua in 1429, and obtained a licentiate in theology on March, 27, 1431. He directed the *Studium* in the convent of St Augustine in Padua and was a member of the college of teachers at the University of Padua, between 1431–1434. He then taught at the *studium* of St Dominique in Siena in 1439, and in the Art Faculty at the University of Ferrara between 1445–1446. He died in Siena in 1446. See Thomas Kaeppeli O.P., *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, 4 vols. (Roma 1970–1993; vol. 4 with Emilio Panella O.P.), vol. 1, p. 138.

[44] *Ibid.*: "Longe enim meliori tempore et faciliori vixit quam nos ipsi vivamus, tante sunt presentium temporum et hominum molestie ac perturbationes tamque acerbe, ut nil molestius nil turbulentius nil demum atrocius hac hominum vita esse crediderim. Ergo, ille quidem quiescit, nos vero superstites temporum iniquitatibus quatimur ac prope modum vitam morte omni alia tristiorem conducimus."

Dominicans, who flourished under such leaders, in spite of these crises; 3. Now, without such men as leaders, the Dominicans endure the most bitter and painful consequences.[45]

Jacobus critisizes Johannes' reply, in which, he argues, just as in syllogisms or geometry, the same consequence is always produced. New and better thoughts are required to soften and moderate the memory of this crisis.[46] Jacobus is still trying to calm Johannes' agitated and restless soul; but he also insists that a new mode of thinking is required, one which differs from those which were commonly used in mediaeval theological discussions, and which, so its seems to him, Johannes has not abandoned. But what is this new mode of thinking?

A few lines below, Jacobus introduces a new participant to the discussion: the Augustinian Hermit Franciscus.[47] He emphasizes the need for hearing other opinions, and of taking advantage of this time when they are all assembled together, since it will not last long. Franciscus came to Lucca to give a sermon (*predicationis gratia*) and Jacobus hopes that there is something to gain from this conversation with him (*spero ex eo quid grati intelligemus*). This type of conversation seems to be opposed to the syllogism or geometric mode of discussion mentioned before. Yet another participant is introdeced by Johannes: Paulus Lucanus, a Franciscan professor.[48] So, the new mode is a dialogue, a conversa-

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[45] *Ibid.*, f. 8^{r}: "In illis enim etsi turbulentissime tempestates nostre multis ante annis inchoate tum vero ob eiusque nostri magistratum amplissime consumate floruerint, nunc tamen fructus amarissimos et acerbissimos pertulerant."

[46] *Ibid.*, ff. 8^{r}–8^{v}: "Ut conclusione sillogismus ut linee punctis, utque superficie corpora terminantur, ita omnis tua cogitatio omnisque ¶ [8^{v}] sermo semper ad eundem locum excurrunt. Tandem hec rerun nostrarum recordatio novis melioribusque cogitationibus lenienda ac temperanda est."

[47] *Ibid.*, f. 8^{v}: "Volo itaque quoniam ⟨⟨prime postulationis mee ipsius ad esse non censes⟩⟩ paucis his diebus quibus una mansuri sumus, si tamen ea tibi sententia placeat quiddam oblectationis et gaudii assummamus. Nam postea predicandi exercitationibus impediti nec mutuo nos visuri nec ad plures dies invicem collaturi sumus. Ac primum fratrum Magistrum Franciscum nostrum virum inter Heremitas preclarissimum nostrisque amicissimum quem predicationis gratia hisce diebus Lucam venisse accepi adibimus. Is enim ut tu re scis homo dignissimus atque officiosisimus est. Spero ex eo quid grati intelligemus." I have not, so far, been able to identify this historical figure.

[48] *Ibid.*: "Sed iam ut placet Franciscum adeamus et nostri officii partem erga virum egregium persoluamus. Ut ergo illum convenimus forte eius visendi gratiam et Paulus Lucanus homo certe humanissimus, minorumque professor acerrimus eodem advenerat." Notice his two epithets: he is both classically educated and a Franciscan professor. Paulus Lucanus or Paulus de Luca was bachelor, vicar of the province and a preacher who arrived at Florence in 1451, joined the Faculty of Theology as a lector in Bible and the Sentences, and was active as a preacher. He was elected as a vicar of the Observants in Tuscany between 1459–1462, 1465–1468, 1470–1473. He was active in

tion between several people, presenting different opinions, which Caroli apparently regards as the most suitable format for discussing the present crisis. Franciscus turns towards Paulus and warns him that he should have more compassion for the 'relics' of this disaster, who are citizens, members of religious orders, and friars, although everyone had treated them like strangers or enemies.[49] In 'relics' Franciscus refers of course to Jacobus and Johannes. From Paulus' answer we gather that he already met Johannes in Florence and heard what happened.[50] Drawing on the authority of Augustine, Paulus maintains that God sometimes permits scandals to happen because they can serve as triggers for advancing towards a better state; in this way, he argues, the most serious difficulties produce the most sacred results.[51] He also seems to emphasize the importance of airing conflicting opinions, and asks the others to accept this diversity, since it derives from good intentions.[52] Diversity of opinion is thus presented here as a usuful instrument for discussing the spiritual crisis.

The inseparability of the religious and the political crisis is emphasized again in Johannes' response in which, he argues, the whole city and all good men suffer on account of this crisis, and he requires the judgment of good men regarding these events.[53] Paulus' speech, follow-

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the reform of the convent of S. Francesco in Lucca. See Piana, *La facoltà*… pp. 92–93, 293.

[49] *Ibid.*, ff. 8^{v}–9^{r}: "En eius tempestatis de qua nunc demum loquebamur summa tamquam tabulata conspicimus. ¶ [9^{r}] (Nam et nos ipsos credo tum dentibus conterebant.) Hae ruine aut excidii reliquie sunt. Quo circa longe his miserendum videtur ⟨quos⟩ non ut cives non ut religiosos non postremo ut fratres. Atqui alienos tanquam peregrinos utque acerbissimos hostes ita severe et impie omnes ut ita dixerim tractaverunt."

[50] *Ibid.*, f. 9^{r}: "Ego iam pridem hunc virum cum Florentie essem cognovi, plurimumque dilexi, et nuper has eorum procellas per sensi mirumque in modum et ordinis et familie huius misereor / o / in qua quondam nostrisque diebus tot viri prestantissimi floruerunt."

[51] *Ibid.*: "Scanda⟨⟨la⟩⟩ non nunquam contingant oportet [Mt 18, 7] que teste Aurelio Augustino [*Enchiridion* VIII, 27; XXIV, 96; Petrus Lombardus, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, I, dist. XLVI, cap. 4] deus nunquam evenire permitteret nisi tantopere bonus esset ut semper ex malis quid maius bonum, profere curaret. Quid scimus forsan et ea scandala optimas et sanctissimas res in posterum erunt paritura."

[52] *Ibid.*, ff. 9^{r}–9^{v}: "Nam et hec finem habitura non dubito et fortasse meliorem quam ipsi speretis. Sed quoniam in hanc rem hodierna die devenimus satisque ociosi sumus non ab re erit si diutius, in causa ista versemur. Diversi enim diversa et referunt et sentiunt. Et ideo precor ne siqua in vos ipse protulero, egre mea excipiatis verba. Quippe ex eodem caritatis fonte quo et Francisci nostri emanant et mea prodire ¶ [9^{v}] verba scitote."

[53] *Ibid.*, f. 9^{v}: "Quod casuum nostrorum misereamini quibus et civitas omnis et

ing immediately after, presents a critique of Johannes' position. Paulus, who speaks from the perspective of a contemporary professional theologian, claims that authority, obedience, and the fear of God are fundamental to religion: there is no religion without these elements.[54] In fact, he continues, obedience is essential for any social order, but for friars like Johannes and Jacobus, it should have been the highest principle in any situation.[55] Paulus then uses the biblical precept of turning the other cheek against Johannes' position.[56] But there is an important difference. In the Bible and in early Christianity those who cause the suffering were anti-Christian pagans; here those who have caused the injustice are inside the Order and the house. What then should be done? According to Paulus, good should be returned for evil, even when it occurs inside the Christian house. He is also loyal to the ethic

boni quilibet indoluerunt gratias ingentes habemus. Quod autem causa cognoscatur nostra et ab his presertim qui animi egritudine nulla tenentur non modo non egre feremus verum id quam cupidissime exoptamus. Que si ad bonorum virorum iudicium referatur, non dubito / ius / quin pro nobis sententiam consequamur."

[54] *Ibid.*: "Mi/c/hi vero longe alia mens est ⟨⟨non numquam aliisque permultis⟩⟩ quam ipsi credatis. Plus enim apud me semper valuit boni communis au/c/toritas quam privata amicorum presum/n/ptio. Itaque rem utram quo pacto iustificare possitis non video. Equidem ut ante dixi vestri misereor plurimum sed religionum nostrarum quam maxime. In hac autem re vestra totius religionis et sanctimonie formam intueor non modo fuisse neglectam verum omnino prostratam atque dirutam, eo⟨⟨que⟩⟩ dementie et impietatis in religionibus nostris iam ventum ut nullum admodum inperditum sit, nulla obedientia ad ultimum nullus dei timor nulla religio."

[55] *Ibid.*, f. 10^{r}: "Quid si servi in dominum, si membra in caput, sique uxor in virum consurgerent diceremus. Quibus vocibus, quibus clamoribus universa civitas personaret vel quibus tandem penis et questionibus plectendos arbitraremur. Contumaces servos, impiam coniugem nulla ratione ferendos pernitiosum vero membrum a reliquo corpore precidendum, nec ferendi, nec miserendi quempiam locum esse. Perinde nos ipsos eorum in sede componite tumque demum animi langore semoto clare intelligetis, quis ex vobis erraverit. Sed dicet quispiam. Domo nos expoliare properabat. Quis ante equo id animo tulerit. Levis hec excusatio est et parvo negocio abicienda. Nonne obedientiam voto promisistis. Nonne precepta servaturos. Nonne voluntati cessuros polliciti ⟨⟨honores⟩⟩? Nonne memoria tenere vestri debuerant salvatoris nostri sententias?"

[56] *Ibid.*, ff. 10^{r}–10^{v}: "Siquis te maxilla percusserit, praebe illi et aliam. Siquis tunicam furto subripuerit da illi et pallium [Mt 5, 39–40]. Ubi est igitur religio. Ubi cerimonie. Ubi in pro ¶ [10^{v}] missis fides. Ubi tandem proximorum hedificatio et exemplar? Si ita faciundum ceteris proponamus. Ita enim pro domo ut dicitis causam suscepistis ac si vestrum aliquod haberetur. Quid autem sui quod privati quod proprii religiosum decet, qui etiam et propriam voluntatem abiecit. Aratrum accepistis ⟨⟨retro⟩⟩ aspiciendum putatis [Lc 9, 62]. Esto autem quod vos domo privandos venisset, esto quod omnia iniuste factum properaret, quod vos patria pellere, quodque rebus exuere in animo esset vestri tamen officii fuerat patientissime omnia ferre nec malum pro malo reddere semperque ante oculos instar speculi cuiusdam habere vite presentis incomoda propria condigna futuris nequaquam existere."

of turning the other cheek even here when it comes to tyrants.[57] But once again, the tyrant is an insider not an outsider; indeed, he is the general superior of the Dominican Order, acting with the approval of the pope himself. All the historical examples he adduces in his attack on Johannes and Jacobus are of enemies of Christianity.[58] But then he reaches a problematic equation:

> And so even if he [Marziale Auribelli] might have judged you unjustly, nonetheless what was most glorious [as] to suffer something most similar to martyrdom in the name of God?[59]

If Johannes and Jacobus should consider themselves as martyrs—or at least as those who acted most similarly to martyrs—their enemies in the Dominican Order should be regarded as tyrants. Yet, what kind of martyrdom do Christians suffer at the hands of other Christians? Paulus seems to be aware of the problem, for his next argument is that if in regard to anti-Christian pagan tyrants, the most cruel enemies in the history of Christianity, the ethic of turning the other cheek was the right one, it is even more justified in this case, where judgment has been delivered by most excellent and educated judges, who are distinguished members of the Dominican Order. For Paulus the judgment is just, and the position of Johannes and Jacobus is wrong.[60] But still the

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[57] *Ibid.*, f. 11^{r}: "Hic vero ordinis nostri caput et quod gravissimum est non ea dignitate nisi a vestris ornatus. Hic pontificis summi in re vestra iudex et censor. Hic postremo Beatissimi Domini patris nostri pre se gerens insignia qua audacia qua fronte quave animi cecitate abiciendus fuit. Assurgent profecto boni omnes vosque non mediocriter accusabunt. Qui si ut arbitror dicentis non gregem lupus salvare at perdere et mactare, veniebat. Aderunt martyres Christi hisce vocibus ⟨⟨vestros iustissime⟩⟩ obiurgantes. Petimus. Respondete. Anne rabies tyrampnorum effrenis cum lapsis habenis in oves odio capitali sevirent cum nos patria domo rebus ⟨⟨ac⟩⟩ dignitatibus privare properarent cum parentibus natos / enim / cum coniuges maritis sinu avellere, nulla pietate dubitarent, cumque vitam extorquere arderent gregem et illi servare et non potius mactare (ut dicitis) ac perdere inaudita cupiditate pergebant. Et tamen non repugnasse quenquam accepimus sed iugulum ferienti devotissime prebuisse."

[58] *Ibid.*, f. 11^{v}: "Sed certe sanctissimo adsunt exemplo, adsunt et hystoriarum et felicium gestorum annalibus quibus luce clarius intueri valemus eos vel repugnare vel vim virtute repellere vel saltem effugere potuisse cum et lapidibus ora cum cede corpora cumque romana vel barbara securi capita ferirentur. Anne vobis minus fidei, minus spei, minusque in deum amoris, qui religiosi qui voto astricti qui humilitatis ac mansuetudinis habitu honestati estis, quam militibus quamve femminis esse debuerat? Quomodo autem vel theucrorum vel hereticorum vel ceterorum infidelium strictissimos gladios et confertissimas acies pro fide substineretis nostra, qui in minimis defecistis."

[59] *Ibid.*: "Itaque si vos etiam iniuste iudicasset pro deo ni/c/hilominus quid martyrio simillimum pertulisse gloriosissimum fuit."

[60] *Ibid.*, ff. 11^{v}–12^{r}: "Id autem fieri nequamquam potuisse existimo quoniam non ad

implication of martyrs inside Christianity is disturbing and it is an indication of a real crisis. Paulus concludes his speech by stressing once again the importance of authority and obedience (*iugum obedientiae*) as the foundation of all religion.[61]

A comparison between Paulus' speech and Johannes' previous discussion of Baptista reveals an interesting tension between the status of institutions such as monasticism or the religious orders on the one hand, and that of magistrates, the individuals who are in charge of these institutions, on the other. While Paulus is trying to deal with the institutional crisis by highlighting the problem of disobedience, on the assumption that these institutions are basically good, Johannes focuses on the moral standards of those who lead these institutions, on the assumption that these institutions cannot in themselves be regarded as the source of just management. Paulus here represents the standard theological response to the crisis, while Johannes voices a criticism of the present state of religion and religious institutions.

It is Franciscus, not Johannes, who responds to Paulus' attack. There is no doubt, he argues, that the ethic of turning the other cheek belongs to people who achieved perfection, suggesting ironical analogy between Paulus' perfect speech and these perfect figures, that is, the martyrs. He reminds Paulus, however, that not everyone can be a martyr, or an Apostle, or the Virgin. Everyone has his own vocation according to his degree of faith, and his share in the Holy Spirit.[62] Martyrdom

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barbaros, non ad alienos, non postremo ad infideles iudices demandati estis sed ad humanissimos, ad doctissimos, adque optimos viros vestrisque ordinis prestantissimos duces remissi fui ¶ [12r] stis, ut de iure disceptarent, resque vestras sancte ac pie componerent. Cumque fortasse primum dubitatio multis inesset quis vestrum iure vel iniuria militasset, finis certe omnibus demonstravit quoniam illi parti victoriam dedit, que iusta et pia arma sumpsisset."

[61] *Ibid.*, f. 12r: "Nam et ista fere a multis obiciuntur vobis, idque demum addiciunt si nil aliud mali re ista fuisset admissum illud saltem negari non poterit, vos aliis viam perfecto dedisse ut et maioribus suis obsistant et obedientie sanctissimum ac suave iugum, quo semper religio omnis ac sanctimonia stetit collo excutiant qua ex re labi omnia et prosterni certissime scimus." Notice again the motif of giving an example to posterity.

[62] *Ibid.*, f. 12v: "Quippe omnis oratio tua altissimum tenet perfectionis gradum, quem perpauci consequntur in vita. Igitur ut qualemcumque pro his defensionem suscipiam, quis dubitet ⟨⟨id quod de maxilla vel tunica retulisti⟩⟩ aut non semper illa esse facienda, sed si factu opus sit aut eam rem ad perfectos dumtaxat pertinere. Siquidem consilia magis quam precepta vocamus. Eius autem rei maximo documento esse potest, quod salvator ipse cuius sententiam tam magnifice predicasti et vere in maxilla percussus non aliam prebuit quin potius ut causam diceret postulavit, / perspicuum est /. Quod autem de martyribus in causam attulisti eiusdem profecto rationis est. Neque enim omnes

was established on the model of perfect behaviour, Franciscus claims, in a specific historical moment in which it was required for establishing a new faith, undermining the faithlessness of princes, and refuting any other arguments against Christianity.[63] He is drawing attention to the historical process in which Christianity became the religion of the world, a process which required perfect models. Yet, it also required, at later times, different types of behaviour suited to the changing historical situations.[64] Consequently, there are different kinds of perfection, suitable for individual persons and specific historical moments, rather than one and absolute perfection of the *communis homo*:

> But let us be content with this mediocre perfection [of ours], so that with this power in our soul we hasten to come towards this sublime state. [But] it will be sufficient progress for us, if we reach a corner of glory. But [as to] what you add that it was worthy to honour a universal man. I myself admit that it would be so if it were possible. But it would be futile for a universal man to direct himself towards those [perfect people]; only an individual man [can do so]. If, as you have said, it is indeed the case that we should attribute actions to supposites, nevertheless a universal man, as is the view of Aristotle, is either to be regarded as non-existent, or as consisting of individual men, how will this man who is universal be a producer of actions? But if you think thus not because of [some] universal man, [you should think so] because of man's dignity.[65]

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martyres esse possunt ut non omnes apostoli aut virgines sed vocationem quisque suam sequatur oportet. Et unus quidem sic, ali vero sic, unicuique autem secundum mensuram fidei sanctique spiritus partitionem."

[63] *Ibid.*: "Credo itaque martyres non obstituisse principibus quoniam si secus facerent nequaquam martyres esse potuissent, sed id tum quidem arbitror gestum ad confirmandam fidei novitatem principumque perfidiam confundendam quodque fortasse nec alia ratione fieri profecto potuerit."

[64] *Ibid.*, ff. 12^{v}–13^{r}: "Nam postea quam viribus fides tueri ⟨⟨potuit⟩⟩ lateque diffundi ⟨⟨illi⟩⟩ potestas data est ¶ [13^{r}] armis et equo marte certatum vel legimus ipsi vel vidimus. Tunc autem mansuetudine fides, religioque christiana constituenda fuit, que nunc demum aliis artibus confirmanda atque servanda est, ne fortasse qui fidem assumpsissent aut largitione aut metu id fecisse invidi ac perditi homines iudicarent. Et quamquam saluberrima sint profunde humilitatis exempla, tamen ut ante dixi hoc non omnium sed perfectorum est qui salvatoris nostri vestigia, arta observatione omnino prosequenda proponunt."

[65] *Ibid.*, ff. 13^{r}: "Nos autem contenti hac medi⟨o⟩cri perfectione simus quomodo ea vis animo nostris ut ad eam sublimitatem venire propereremus. Satis / autem / nobis proficientibus erit si glorie ad angulum pertingamus. Quod autem addis com⟨m⟩unem hominem honorandum fuisse. Fateor et ipse quidem si id fieri possit. At com⟨m⟩unis homo nequaquam ad istos se contulit, sed privatus. Si enim ut tu ipse dixisti ita profecto est ut suppositis opera tribuamus, homo vero com⟨m⟩unis ut Aristotili placet aut ni/c/hil esse dicendus est, aut in singularibus constitutus quonam modo is homo qui universalis sit, operationum effector erit. Si vero id non ob communem hominis

The notion that martyrdom was justified and appropriate at a certain historical moment is a humanist idea, as was the acceptance of mediocre perfection. Franciscus' argument stresses the historical and the individual, while criticizing the universal notion of man defended by Paulus, which derived from scholastic thought. Franciscus shows that such a concept of man is inappropriate in this discussion, where real actions are at stake. We can observe here a clear contrast between the scholastic theology of Paulus and the humanist theology of Franciscus, for whom *dignitas hominis* outweighs *ratio communis hominis*. Franciscus makes the point that it is actions which should determine whether a magistrate is good or evil and that honour is the result of good actions, not of authority.[66] Judged by this criterion, plots against tyrants, who are evil leaders, noxious and destructive either to the Church or to the republic, should be regarded as good and justified. Caroli, speaking

rationem censes at propter hominis dignitatem." *Suppositum* in one sense is a hypothetical force or law of nature which is not observed as affecting some action but is taken to be its cause. The universal concept of man, we are told, is not such a law or force of nature, but a generalization made of individual men. Aristotle is cited in what appears to be a combination of *EN* 1096a34–b2 (αὐτοάνθρωπος) and *De anima* 402b5–9 (τὸ δὲ ζῷον τὸ καθόλου ἤτοι οὐθεν ἐστιν ἢ ὕστερον). Thus, the general concept of man is not a hypothetical force of nature which stands behind actions, and if we speak of it in such terms, it is only because of the dignity of man. The Latin translation of the *Ethica nicomachea* sentence reads: "Queret autem quis quid volunt dicere per se unumquodque, si in per se homine una et eadem racio est que hominis." In scholastic philosophy as reflected in the works of Thomas Aquinas for instance, we find the terms and phrases *homo abstractus seu separatus, seu extra materiam seu communis seu per se homo* and *homo materialis seu naturalis seu realis seu sensibilis seu singularis*, presenting the idea of man without, or separated in thought from, the individual man or the general man or man without matter or man by or for himself and man supplied with matter or man in nature and existing outside the mind or the sensibly realized man or the individual man. See Roy J. Deferrari and M. Inviolata Barry, *A Lexicon of St. Thomas Aquinas Based on the Summa Theologica and Selected Passages of his Other Works* (Baltimore 1948), p. 487. For some of these phrases in Aristotle, see *Metaphysica* 1070a28–30 (*homo singularis* in De Moerbeka's translation); 1084a14–20 (*per se homo* in De Moerbeka's translation).

Notice that in this Aristotelian context the phrase *mediocris perfectio* may refer also to the goldem mean, although in *EN* 1125b13–25, 1133b32–33, and 1142b22–24 for instance, we have in the medieval Latin translations *medium* or *medietas* for μέτριον, μεσότης, or μέσον.

[66] *Ibid.*, ff. 13^{r}–13^{v}: "Arbitror et ipse, hec venerabilia fore ubi et dignitas bono viro obtigerit et ipse dedecoris sui causas nequaquam prestiterit. Quod si rebus obscenis ¶ [13^{v}] fedissimisque criminibus delatum munus fedaverit, non propter dignitatem que per se bona est, sed ob scelera obque sevitiam et impietatem non modo ferendum at omnino abiciendum iudico." I would like to emphasize the fact that both Paulus and Franciscus are representing here models of scholastic and humanist thinking. The historical phenomena are of course much more complicated, certainly with regard to the later scholastic philosophy.

through Franciscus, emphasizes the duty of an individual (*singilaris, privatus*) to rise up against evil rulers.[67] Yet again the religious aspects of the situation are inseparable from the political ones.

Franciscus goes on to cite examples from Roman history and from Scripture of justified opposition to tyrants.[68] In doing so he returns to the formula tyrants vs. martyrs; therefore, Johannes and Jacobus should be regarded as martyrs within the Church, or as ancient Romans who took the law into their own hands—the sign of a political and religious crisis. He argues that, according to Apostolic opinion, such leaders should not be allowed to destroy the whole body of the republic.[69] The context here is again both religious and political: we should not be afraid of destroying what seem to be evil institutions or leaders. The spiritual crisis is presented here as a crisis in religious customs. There is here also another important notion: the organic conception of history and of institutions which dictates that we must sometimes amputate a limb in order to save the entire body. Destroying a part can be seen as the beginning of rebuilding and renovating the whole.[70] In

[67] *Ibid.*, ff. 13^{v}–14^{r}: "Quam quidem ob rem et concilia adunantur et optime ac sanctissime in tyrampnos coniurationes fiunt ne populi opprimantur ne/ve / ecclesie ipsa pulcritudo fedetur neve res publice malis principibus corrupte omnino dissipentur et proruant. Quod si hec publica au/c/toritate conficienda sentires. Ego ad membra omnia insani capitis curam attinere existimo. Quippe commune non nisi ex singularis adunatione consurgit. Quo circa nec vituperandus ¶ [14^{r}] ille videtur qui licet privatus rem publicam ultum perrexerit qui impiorum e manibus patriam liberarit, qui periculis obviam ierit, quique / se/se ac murum rapinis et facinoribus principum opposuerit et eorum potentie quasi habenas quasdam mira virtute iniecerit." Does Caroli remember Tacitus, *Agricola* 42: "sciant, quibus moris est inlicita mirari, posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos viros esse…"? But Caroli would obviously not agree with Tacitus' view in this context.

[68] *Ibid.*, f. 14^{r}: "Quid enim in Porsennam Mutius, quid in Appium Virginius, quid in Cesarem Brutus, quid postremo ut sacre littere ferunt vel in Sisaram Delbora, vel in Abimelech femina, vel in Holofernem Judith, aut in Aman Hester, iudee mulieres aut in impios reges Machabei gesserint. Nonne et hii privati qui nihilominus libertatem patriam ulti egregie litteris commendantur?"

[69] *Ibid.*: "Neque vero Apostolica obsistit sententia qua forte pronuntiari posset, obedientiam abeo non solum bonis principibus verum et discolis imperari quem id hoc pacto accipiendum reor si tollerabilia eorum imperia sint nec absque maiori scandalo remedium adhiberi possit. At si minori malo admisso res publica liberari si criminibus via incidi sique medicina vulneribus queat apponi, nonne impium ac sceleratum esset per socordiam et ignaviam sinere totum rei publice corpus inquinari ac deperire."

[70] *Ibid.*, f. 15^{v}: "Ita ergo et in hac re morum quidem dissolutio sequens oportuit tamen non hoc ideo agitur quo mores ipsi religioque depereant, sed quoniam fieri necesse est ut novam generationem precedat alternatio coruptioque multorum. Numquam enim esset generatio Socratis nisi fuisset corruptio hominis. Numquam esset confectio navis, nisi esset incisio arboris. Pertinet quidem rerum ipsa successio ad com-

fact, destruction is essential and necessary for the continuity of the body (whether religious or political) and its renovation.

Franciscus then returns to his critique of empty authority and claims that the victory of the enemies of Johannes and Jacobus should not be exaggerated, since often in a war, fortune changes and the victims become victors. We have not seen the end of this war.[71] The conclusion of his oration includes a sharp attack on Johannes' and Jacobus' judges, for violating both human justice and divine law; by closing the monastery, moreover, they behaved like the worst enemies of Christianity:[72]

> The infidel Teucer [i.e the Turk] himself did not close the temples of the Christians whom he captured. Believe me, I cannot be sufficiently indignant concerning this issue. But I hope that they [those judges] are not going to slip away without punishment.[73]

Paulus in his response agrees that an evil leader is worthy of destruction, but he goes on to claim that the entire Dominican Order is suffering from a sickness which has to be cured.[74] He then uses a weak and eristic syllogism, arguing that since Franciscus has admitted that

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munem mundi spetiem et decorum, non quo prima illa perdantur sed quo novis supervenientibus vetusta quodammodo renoventur."

[71] *Ibid.*, f. 16^{r}: "Victoriam autem quam dicis illos fuisse consecutos non tantopere extollendam credo. Posset enim illud istis accidere quod sepenumero in bello audivimus in quomodo non numquam fortuna mutata ad victos victoria ipsa concessit. Neque vero belli finem conspeximus."

[72] *Ibid.*, ff. 16^{v}–17^{r}: "Quamobrem ex hac ipsa vulgaris consuetudinis permutatione nil aliud conjecturari valeo nisi in causa ista habunde ius fasque fuisse ab illis iudicibus violatum. Qua enim ratione eos equo iure cum his egisse existimare possum quos nec deo, nec sanctis tandem vero nec beatissime genitrici vidimus pepercisse. Quippe tanta illos indignatio tantusque furor invasit ut templum illud sanctissimum et universo orbi summorum pontificum habitatione insignem toto pene mense Augusto tenere conclusum, nulla tantarum celebritatum reverentia nulloque populi reclamantis intuitu vererentur. Si autem ¶ [17^{r}] hec doctorum ac bonorum virorum opera et non magis cruentissimorum tyrampnorum ⟨⟨videantur⟩⟩ facta, nescio quos ipsi barbaros appellemus. At enormiter (ut ita dixerim) et intollerabiliter erraverunt. Ergo deus et sancti almaque virgo ac populus omnis penas luere debuerunt. Non solent templa maximeque precipua nisi ex populi totius aut principum pertinacia claudi."

[73] *Ibid.*, f. 17^{r}: "Infidelis ipse Teucer Christianorum quos ceperit templa non claudit. Crede michi in hac re satis indignari non possum. Sed spero eos nequaquam impune transituros."

[74] *Ibid.*, ff. 17^{r}–17^{v}: "Malum igitur capud abscidendum fuit. Tecum sum. Sed non per istos modo. Morbus curandus est sed non hac medicina dumtaxat. Totus ordo erravit totus errata emendet. Quo circa universa predicatorum religio non hii modo insurgere debuissent. Alioquin plus zeli esset in parte quam rationis in toto. Ni/c/hil autem esse totum preter partes accepimus [Aristotle, *Physica* 210a14–17]. Quare / non / ¶ [17^{v}] non

Johannes and Jacobus were not perfect, but he has used the example of perfect men, he has shown, contrary to his intentions, that Johannes and Jacobus are not perfect and therefore they were wrong. He has thus unwittingly defended them.[75] Paulus is thus revealed as someone who is bound to syllogisms, a representative of the traditional scholastic reasoning. Franciscus criticizes this type of reasoning and claims that his arguments concern not merely Johannes and Jacobus but rather everyone.[76] He distinguishes between two kinds of perfection: one absolute and the other relative. Absolute perfection can be attributed to God alone; even the martyrs did not consider themselves perfect in this sense. Relative perfection is available to all creatures; but some of them, despite all their errors, did not err in the one great act for which they are remembered. So, Johannes and Jacobus who are relatively perfect even compared to martyrs and biblical figures were right on this issue.[77]

At this point Johannes rejoins the discussion and explains that he preferred that Franciscus should answer Paulus' attack first, so that he would not be regarded as someone who speacks out of his own grief

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magis ad hos quam ad illos nec magis ad alios quam ad omnes hec res attinere videtur." Franciscus has already used this metaphor of healing a sick body: see n. 67.

[75] *Ibid.*, f. 17^{v}: "Deinde non nullas rationum mearum perfectis tribuendas esse dixisti. Prestat autem mi/c/hi plurimum, si hos non perfectos ipse fatearis. Et tamen perfectorum exempla detulisti. Itaque inperfecti sunt. Qui autem imperfectus sit quo profecto imperfectus est errat. Cumque res ista non ad perfectionem spectet ut ipse dixisti procul dubio eos erasse tua ratione confirmas. Vide ergo ne dum eos defendere putas accuses."

[76] *Ibid.*: "Ut nulla tam fortis civitas est quam studium humanum non superet. Ita nulla tam valida ratio afferretur quam oppugnare non possis. Meis ergo rationibus non id sentio ad hos modo religionis curam attinere verum ad hos et ad illos simulque ad omnes."

[77] *Ibid.*, ff. 18^{r}–18^{v}: "Cum in omni philosophia exercitatissimus sis te latere non arbitror ni/c/hil deum creasse omnino perfectum. Quippe id soli deo tributum. Igitur quod perfectum dicimus bi ¶ [18^{v}] nos habere sensus dicunt. Aut omnino aut alterius comparatione quorum alterum simpliciter alterum genere perfectum vocant. Itaque si hos non perfectos dixi omnino aut simpliciter dictum puta. Nam et propheta inquit omnis homo mendax [Ps 115, 11], quod eo pacto intelligimus homini omni et si perfecto semper quoddam deesse diligenter si consideretur. Quis autem dubitet hos non omnino perfectos si martyres ipsi nec eo pacto perfectionis sibi vendicavere nomen. Sed nec hi quorum gesta memoravi et exempla detuli omnino perfecti erant. Nonne nisi illud dicemus deo volente confectum et Raab contra patriam et Judith proditionis ⟨⟨pro patria⟩⟩ arguenda foret. Nonne et Hester et Helyas crudelitatis in illos quos / aut / aut necari curaverunt aut cremari? Quamobrem et hos imperfectos dixi ut non omni ex parte perfectos intelligas, et ubi errassent imperfectos, ubi egregie ea re perfectos efficerem. In hoc autem facto hos non omnino errasse satis persuasum puto." Notice that the martyrs are only mentioned in general, while errors are ascribed to figures from the Old Testament and the Apocrypha.

rather than out of the truth.[78] He then attacks the successors of the worthy founders of the Dominican Order who are, he maintains, destroying the house.[79] The emphasis in his speech is again on the moral values of those who are in charge and not on the institutions. His point is simple: good leaders have a good effect on their nations and states, while evil leaders are the cause of all corruption and destruction.[80]

Paulus seems to be persuaded by Johannes' speech and admits that those whom he attacked and criticized are more worthy of consolation;[81] but he still criticizes Johannes and Jacobus,[82] adding another feature of the spiritual condition of the time:

> And that we see at this time things which no man would have [ever] believed he was going to see.[83]

Paulus claims that a new crime (*novum facinus*) has recalled to people's memory the great ancient examples which had been forgotten.[84] Franciscus in his turn also emphasizes the act of memory as a consolation amidst the difficulties of the present.[85] He again claims that Johannes and Jacobus had acted righteously against iniquity, drawing a clear contrast between *auctoritas seu gratia* and *iustitia et aequitas*.[86] The implication is that the source of authority should be justice and that without justice

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[78] *Ibid.*, f. 18^{v}: "Ego vero patres humanissimi de hac re nostra quemlibet alium quam me ipsum loqui ma/llem/lo, ne egritudine magis quam veritate iudicer fuisse locutus."

[79] *Ibid.*, f. 19^{v}: "Solum id michi sepenumero hanc rem nostram animo revoluenti dolori fuit, quod homines novi et hii presertim qui eam domum ita preclaram a progenitoribus susceperunt, ⟨⟨eandem⟩⟩ perditum ire non dubitarunt."

[80] *Ibid.*: "Ita perditissimi homines insolentes factiosi scelesti ambitiosique modo velint. Ut boni, ut modesti, ut severi, postremo ut graves, scientiam consecuntur. Quo fit ut quem ad modum hii reparare conservare et augere populos ac res publicas. Ita illi corrumpere dissipare ac tandem perdere possint valeantque."

[81] *Ibid.*, f. 20^{r}: "Nam ita orationibus vestris animo persuasistis meo ut quos ante hos accusandos et acerbissime arguendos, nunc consolandos atque monendos potissimum censeam."

[82] *Ibid.*, f. 20^{v}: "Evenietque vobis ut segetibus evenire videmus que si quam primum herbescant pauciores auguramur fructus esse futuros."

[83] *Ibid.*, f. 21^{r}: "Utque ea hoc tempore vidimus que hominum nullus se credidisset visurum."

[84] *Ibid.*: "Siquidem et optima antiquorum exempla ipsa vetustate exciderant animo que nunc demum novo facinore / ad / hominum ad memoriam revertuntur."

[85] *Ibid.*, ff. 22^{r}–22^{v}: "Sed quoniam vos hodierna die intueor / quod ¶ [22^{v}] quanque non credidissem / letor plurimum quam aliquos ex tanta clade superesse perspicio cum quibus et rerum praeteritarum meminisse et nos inter solari possimus."

[86] *Ibid.*, f. 22^{v}: "Proinde intelligunt omnes in hac causa vestra ius fuisse violatum plusque vel epulas egregio more confectas vel aurum quod pulcrum in eo fertur vel iniquitatem aut quod magis credo. C auctoritatem seu gratiam potuisse quam iustitiam et equitatem." I have not yet managed to find out what is behind this C.

authority turns into tyranny and loses its moral validity. God will not always tolerate such great impieties.[87]

For Johannes, the general spiritual malaise is also a serious personal crisis.[88] His only consolation comes from words, and the contrast he draws is between words and reality:

> And although I would avidly drink up your consolations, yet when I consider these extremely painful matters, all the powers of [my] character are not only dissolved but also fly away in a moment and are dispersed. Though the consolation of words, when they recount great matters which were badly acomplished, may produce something, yet it is most negligible. I wish that we had also been consoled by things in reality.[89]

Words cannot bring real comfort. Johannes then explains some of the background to his exile and present misery,[90] admitting that this conversation has helped him to deal with his feelings and thoughts.[91] Reading Poggio's book on the vicissitudes of fortune made him understand that human matters are permanently unstable and changeable.[92] So, he con-

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[87] *Ibid.*: "Deum non semper tantas impietates laturum."

[88] *Ibid.*, ff. 23^{r}–23^{v}: "Vereorque perinde tuta omnia vitamque et mundum mi/c/hi defuturum credo, adeo spes omnis ablata est. Magis autem deicior succedentibus quam superioribus malis quamquam ista nulla ¶ [23^{v}] sint illis ratione comparanda. Id quidem nec immerito. Ut enim qui fortissima invalitudine laboravit tandem vero studio medicine convaluit, non statim ad pristinas regreditur vires quin potius ea imbecillitate constitutus, quique minima metuat necesse est, nisi vite discrimina pati velit maxima vero restaurationem eget. Ita plus mi/c/hi doloris ingerunt haec minora quam graviora illa fecissent, fractus quidem animo sum nec nisi summa instauratione rerum ad priores vires redire valeo."

[89] *Ibid.*, f. 23^{v}: "Et licet has consolationes vestras avidissime hauriam tamen cum hec tam acerba intueor omnes ingenii vires non modo solvuntur sed momento profugiunt et dissipantur. Verborum quidem consolatio ubi res magne confecte sunt maleque refferunt et si aliquid faciat tamen levissima est. Velim rebus quamque consolaremur."

[90] *Ibid.*, f. 24^{r}: "Binos in ordine magistratus assecutus sum in quibus tanta michi tandem infelicitas fuit ut facile omnes edicere possint. Si male cupimus accidat hunc preficiamus nobis. Siquidem nubecula est procellas conducens. Quo circa multo tempore nominis mei miserabilis recordatio erit cum quo magistratu ista contigerint homines proloquentur."

[91] *Ibid.*, f. 24^{v}: "Quod si emerserit et amicorum consolatione et rationum ac quarundam medicinarum appositione vel minuitur vel omnino curatur. Idque hodie vestra opera ac diligentia humanissime ac scissime actum inmodice animo meo voluptati et consolationi fuit. Quippe incensam mentem inmenso patientie inflammastis amore ut longe nunc res ipsa levior sit ingenio meo quam ante hanc diem et minus ⟨⟨certe⟩⟩ fuisset. Proinde hec dies toto mi/c/hi erit venerabilis evo qua omni pene mentis agitatione liberatus nunc primum vestro beneficio et tartareos sinus et ferocissimas cogitationum mearum bestias vici."

[92] *Ibid.*, f. 26^{r}: "Poggius princeps noster homo eruditus et vehemens eius rei gra-

cludes, following the precedent of changes and reforms of long-standing institutions in antiquity, the Dominican Order should be immediately renovated.[93] This reform must not be delayed, in order to avoid damage.[94] Johannes claims that there is a real danger to the order and to the republic from its enemies within the order.[95] And then he returns, by implication, to the formula of martyrs and tyrants:

> I confess that I became a martyr, but now I have changed into a confessor.[96]

Johannes feels better in Lucca and does not wish to return to Florence, which in his mind stands for endless and pointless struggles.[97] Free from

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tia librum de fortune varietate descripsit quem qui volet legat. Inveniet profecto ex multis / huius / etatis ⟨⟨nostre⟩⟩ exemplis nil in ea stabilitatis aut permanentie fore nec modo eodem bello sed eodem die eodemque congressu mirabiliter et incredibiliter transvolasse." Poggio Bracciolini's *De varietate fortunae* was written between 1447–1448 and was extremely popular in the fifteeth century. For Poggio's text see the critical edition with an introduction and a commentary by Outi Merisalo (Helsinki 1993). By discussing this theme of *Fortuna* Caroli related himself once again not only to Poggio but also to Petrarch and Salutati, and indeed to the humanists in general, since this theme was already regarded as a humanist *topos*, much discussed by them, in its classical and mediaeval contexts.

[93] *Ibid.*: "In hac autem re nostra adeo in sententia stetit ut satis admirari non possim eoque magis quod non tali iustitia et equitate nec talibus viris consistat ut tantopere perseverare debuisset. Item quod si / item / ne una quidem die eas novitates conceptas ⟨⟨inque lucem productas⟩⟩ / af/ferres tantum ni/c/hilominus has inter res nostras et supra memoratas esse probabiliores quantum infinitum inter et ni/c/hil. Itaque si ille quidem tot annos permansere tandem vero immutate sunt earum comparatione hec nostre momento debuerant innovari."

[94] *Ibid.*: "Vereor / que / ⟨⟨proinde⟩⟩ plurimum ne tanta dilatio vitium tandem afferat rebus nostris."

[95] *Ibid.*, f.: 26^{v}: "Enim vero cum his hominibus vivo quorum (nisi nos ipsos decipiamus et in re ista presertim) plurima bona conspectui patent que ita probo ut siqua minus grata insurgant ea omnia ac levia putem. Siquidem eorum duri non numquam mores et in humana ingenia non tantopere rei publice nocent ut nostri. Eorum gesta operienda curant. Extra non perferunt. Bonum vel malum sit domi est."

[96] *Ibid.*f. 27^{r}: "Fateor martyrem me fuisse nunc vero in confessorem mutatus sum." Valla in his *Encomium s. Thomae* (1457) refers to the traditional distinction between martyrs and confessors. Martyrs were solders of Christ who died for their faith, while confessors suffered for confessing their faith, but did not die for it. In any case, the mention of people who suffered for their faith implies tyrants who made them suffer for it. For Valla's discussion see Lorenzo Valla, *Opera omnia*, 2 vols. (Torino 1962), vol. 2, p. 347.

[97] *Ibid.*: "Itaque quo levior hec occupatio mea eo iucundior. Nec magnopere redire desidero. Et quamvis ingenuam michi semper fuisse patrie ac genitricis mee caritatem profitear tum cum homines illos quos inter illi versantur queque cladis relique sunt diligenter inspicio ad multos annos haud redeundum puto. Quomodo enim in ea hominum colluvione omniumque bonorum oppressione equo animo vivere possem?";

communes res, he has greater peace of mind.[98] He nevertheless explains that the Dominican Order has deteriorated because, while there has been an increase in numbers, there has been a decline in scriptural studies and in moral behaviour.[99] It is more prudent, he suggests, to hear about, rather than to see with your own eyes, what you are unable to correct.[100] Finally, he rejects the accusation that he ran away from the battle for the liberty of the monastery and deserted his allies, and insists that he was willing to fight so long as any hope remains.[101]

Franciscus comforts Johannes. Since everything is directed by the divine will he should not lament this crisis so much: he is not to blame. He should turn his attention now to the study of *humanae litterae*.[102] Once again his exile to Lucca is seen as a transition from *sacrae litterae* and *communes res* to *humanae litterae* and private life. Franciscus says that Johannes and Jacobus are not alone, for they have supporters in the

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ibid., f. 27^{v}: "Gladium nos inter posuit hostis ut nulla ratione mi/c/hi persuadere possim nos unquam hac etate in pace mansuros et ego de reditu cogitarem?"

[98] *Ibid.*: "Hec mihi ocia, hec a com⟨m⟩unibus rebus vacatio, hec pax et tranquilitas mea longe quam domus gratiora sunt. Idque fortasse quod non numquam in felicitatem putavi deus non ut par est cognoscenti veluti munus dignissimum contulit mi/c/hi ut ea via e maiori pericolo et confusione liberarer."

[99] *Ibid.*: "Multiplicasti gentem. Ac non magnificasti letitiam [Is 9, 3]. Pernitiosa profecto debet ibi esse plurimorum vita"; *ibid.*: "Sed nec absque divino munere fieri posse credendum est ut homines illi (non enim de omnibus loquor) aliis studiis et moribus domum componant quam semet instituendos curaverint." *Studia* could mean aims and ambitions, but in a discussion of the growth of the Dominican Order it is more likely to mean those studies for which the Dominicans were famous: see n. 121.

[100] *Ibid.*, f. 28^{r}: "Itaque consultius est hec audire quam oculis intueri ubi illa emendare non possis."

[101] *Ibid.*: "Sed tandem socios reliquisti dicet quispiam. Ego si rebus ammissis locum obmisi nulla id iniuria feci. Quamdiu siquidem spe aliqua res nostra stetit tam diu forti magnoque animo rem gerendam putavi. At ubi copie omnes fuse ducesque aut profligati aut capti spes nulla supererat arcem vero tenebant hostes [a number of expressions in the last three sentences are reminiscent of Book II of Virgil's *Aeneid*] nequaquam ad murum capud allidendum sint. Nam et si fortis animi sit pro libertate pugnare ea tamen ammissa rebellem ac pertinacem esse sume dementie iudico. Itaque in hac re nullus iure me accusabit."

[102] *Ibid.*, ff. 28^{v}–29^{r}: "Ceterum si iam ventura divina voluntas decreverat ita alterius prefecturam accidissent sic ⟨⟨et⟩⟩ tua forte autem longe peior conditio vestra fuisset si al/ter/ias ad manus venisset sique tu ac ceteri non repugnarent. Salva quidem manu ut aiunt rem vestram obtinuissent. Itaque si quod venturum erat hoc tempore venit nequaquam tantopere deplorandum nec tua causa venit sed occulta superum dispositione aliquo certe meliori fine. In deum igitur omnia referamus idque erit profecto consultius quam animo et cogitatione consumi. Eoque magis bonis artibus et optimis studiis operam dare curemus que eos qui se domum purgasse gloriuntur omnino mendaces esse ¶ [29^{r}] probemus."

city.[103] It is interesting that Franciscus uses here *civitas omnis* and not *domus* or *familia*. From Johannes' response it is clear that he is referring to Lucca.[104] This is perhaps another example of the intermingling of religious and political language. Jacobus then concludes the first day:

> But this was most gratifying to my soul, that excellent and learned men in a brilliant and subtle manner have argued both for and against [our] cause, using most evident reasonings and demonstrative proofs.[105]

Jacobus himself has practised the art of scholastic disputation. But he adds that he is aware of a more witty and free manner of speaking and arguing, which he ascribes to Franciscus, and of a form of argument, used by Paulus, which speaks directly to the heart.[106] The first book ends with this description of the different ways of conducting a dialogue.

3. Liber dierum lucensium *Book Two*

In the second book, representing the second day of the dialogue, Johannes and Jacobus are now alone, reflecting on their woes, as Jacobus' words make clear. It is stated right at the beginning of the book that the great and illustrious fathers of Santa Maria Novella will occupy

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[103] *Ibid.*, f. 29^{r}: "Qua in re id etiam vobis consolationi amplissime esse potest quod non omnino derelicti videmini, quin potius iam illos homines civitas omnis agnoscere inque vos animum pijssime vertere cepit."

[104] *Ibid.*: "Non alia profecto mente nec intentione arma posuimus adque hanc civitatem convenimus nisi ut tempori copulemur. Si enim pugnandum visum fuisset nequaquam alienam domum neque Lucane civitatis angulum legissemus. Quo circa hunc locum magis hospitio quam bello decrevimus."

[105] *Ibid.*, f. 30^{v}: "Illud autem animo meo acceptissimum fuit quod viri excellentes et clari apertissimis rationibus et demonstrativis locis et pro causa et in causam egregie ac subtiliter disputarunt."

[106] *Ibid.*, ff. 31^{r}–31^{v}: "Siquidem in omni genere vite omnes illi artes satis explicate sunt, et cum religiosis (sic enim nostri similes appellamus) de religione graviter, pie et sancte ac non numquam acriter et severe, cum seculi vero hominibus mansuete, caute, iuste, et cum operepretium arbitratur devote atque ardenter didicit verba proferre Francisci vero nostri festivior ac liberior nec tamen indoctior oratio est. Nos ipsi in utriusque oratione perspeximus quam vehementer quamve docte vel in nostros vel pro nostris uterque invectus sit. Sed in Paulo id longe omnium mirabilius fuit quod in nos orationem exacuens, ita ut etiam eius verba cordis nostris intima penetrarent, nequaquam tamen eum vidimus aut ab innata mentis tranquilitate aut a sermonis dulcedine ac suavitate discedere. Itaque viri dignissimi familiaritatem exoptare ac pro ea re magnopere /e/niti ¶ [31^{v}] optimum iudico." Such words of appreciation by one speaker to another, including some description of his manner of arguing, is a commonplace in

the centre of the discussion. It appears that Caroli was already making the first preparations for writing his second composition, the *Vitae*.[107] The fact that they are alone is stressed also in Jacobus' words.[108] The contrast between a perfect past and a terrible present in which these illustrious fathers, their manners and acts were almost forgotten, is also evident here.[109] So, this book is mainly a reaction against the forgetfulness of men at present, forgetfulness which is a clear indication of the decline and crisis. Jacobus emphasizes the gap between the constitutional changes and reforms, expressed by the words *mutatio* and *innovatio*, and the unpreparedness of minds, citing a passage from Virgil.[110] The implication is that these reforms were empty and meaningless, because people were not mentally prepared for them. Jacobus goes on to accuse their enemies inside the Order of persecution and hatred. He stresses that all this happened inside the house, and that he and Johannes share

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Cicero's dialogues after a long speech has been delivered. See e.g., *Lucullus* 64; *Acad.* I 43. But we notice that Caroli's dialogue is more lively and the speeches are shorter.

[107] *Ibid.*, f. 31^{v}: "Liber secundus dierum lucensium eiusdem. Continet autem commemorationem prestantium patrum, qui in conventu Florentino egregie claruerunt. ⟨I⟩nstituenti michi postero die domi potius ac nobiscum quam cum peregrine religionis hominibus de nostris rebus conferre, presto fuit Jacobus noster id ipsum secus quam sperarem se cogitasse proponens. Hos dies remissiores nostris futuros ac proinde letiores si extraneorum nulla mixtione contineamur. Idemque se de veteris arbitrari. Cui ego inquam. ⟨Johannes:⟩ In hoc Jacobe fiat habunde cognosco amicorum seiunctos animos in unum benivolentia et caritate [Cicero, *Laelius de amicitia* 20] conflari quomodo michi eadem cogitanti tu meis (ut video) cogitationibus occurristi. Quo circa quonian nobis ita videtur domum (ut aiunt) aliis abeuntibus hodierna die servabimus. Cum igitur resectione perfecta orti angulus consulto placuisset et quo sub divo uterque nostrum liberius resideret."

[108] *Ibid.*, f. 32^{r}: "Et ideo quoniam nunc soli sumus nec defensione opus est, parumper augurari libet preterita ita et in nos potius causas retorquere quibus in has calamitates incidimus."

[109] *Ibid.*: "Cum ille novitates nostre iam suis in causis ordiri cepissent longe mirabar quod prioribus annis celebritates nostras tanta pompa atque rerum omnium ⟨⟨effusione⟩⟩ prosequeremur. Necque enim plus nobis auri aut elemosinarum erat ut nostris vocabulis utar quam antea esset. Et tamen superioribus annis simplices dies festos et comitate et ornatu componere solebamus. At ubi res e vestigio inminebant nec tempori nec labori nec etati vel dignitati ad ultimum quodque difficillimum est (nostris presertim) nec impensis consideravi fuisse indultum. Quin potius effusis habenis omnium pene rerum obliti omnes conferebant manus."

[110] *Ibid.*, ff. 32^{r}–32^{v}: "Qua ex re ⟨⟨qua⟩⟩ iam demum augurari libet intelligi certe potuerat, si tum occulos apertos habuissemus maximam aliquam rerum mutationem esse venturam. Neque enim rationi consentane ¶ [32^{v}] um fuit ut in tanta innovatione rerum non etiam esset mutatio animorum. Unde et cum poeta nostro non incongrue diceremus. Nos miseri quibus esset ultimus ille dies festa velamus fronde per urbem [Vergilius, *Aen.* II 248–249]."

some of the responsibility for what happened.[111] He mentions Auribelli and Rochius as their enemies, and presents also some national tensions inside the Order, between French and Italians, but again Jacobus and Johannes are partly to blame, since they have helped to elect the Frenchmen in preference to Italians.[112] They were, therefore, punished not only because they did not agree with Auribelli, but also because they had helped to bring him in when he was young[113]—the words *nos* and *nobis* and verbs in the first person plural underline this point. The character of the young Auribelli was known to those who elected him from the outset; but they only began to resist him when he clipped their wings and began to behave in an insufferable way.[114]

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[111] *Ibid.*, f. 33^{r}: "Si / enim / ea nostri fecissent que facere profecto debuerint, nequiquam tantas incomoditates et pericula perferremus, nec rapacissimi homines dominarentur nobis nisi nos private simultates et odia pene muliebria tenuissent. Nam et nostri (scimus) ad summum fere magistratum pervenerant cum domus et familie nostre hostis ille creatus est nisi alienos nisi barbaros nisique effeminatos magis quam religionem nostram quam provinciam quamve nos ipsos amavissemus. Non ergo si verum fateri velimus, nec nos ipsos decipere nisi de moribus nostris, de non adhibita rebus diligentia, deque minimo in domum et familiam nostram amore queramur. Quis enim eo dementior esse putandus est qui cum suos habere possit extraneos malit?"

[112] *Ibid.*, ff. 33^{r}–33^{v}: "Quid ergo ¶ [33^{v}] mirum si talibus membris pernitiosum caput obvenit? Quippe necessarium erat eam quoque partem reliquo corpori respondere. Et ideo ipsi fuimus qui nos domo exclusimus, qui pecunia mulctavimus, quique cetera mala nobis intulimus. Numquid Rochinum vel Aurum bellum habuisset nostra religio si vel Leonardus vel Dominicus placuissent. At pro Perusino nostroque concive gallos maluimus. Quare qui nostros perferre noluimus iam gallicam servitutem tolleremus oportet." Petrus Rochim was magister in theology and the vicar of the province of Provence in 1450; he was elected as master general of the Order but died during the first month after the elections, in 1450. See: J. Quetif and J. Echard, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum*, 2 vols. (Paris 1723), vol. 1, p. 807. As we have seen, Marziale Auribelli was the master general for the first time between 1453–1462. Leonardus, most probably Leonardus de Datis Florentinus, was the master general between 1414–1425. He is mentioned several times in this book. Dominicus, is Dominicus Iohannis de Corella (c. 1403–1483), who was a bachelor in Bible in the *Studium* in Florence between 1428–1429, magister in theology in 1434, prior in Santa Maria Novella between 1436–1437, prior of the Roman province between 1437–1443, 1450–1455, and lector in theology who lectured also on Dante in Florence between 1469–1470; he was also the general vicar of the Order between 1451–1453. See: Kaeppeli, *Scriptores*… vol. 1, pp. 326–327. I cannot yet identify Perusinus.

[113] *Ibid.*, f. 33^{v}: "Ubi nos aurum bellum maluimus iure ingratitudinis penas damus."

[114] *Ibid.*, f. 34^{v}: "An parum nobis noti mores iuvenis erant quos sepe cum recte sentiretis dampnastis? Juvenem pertinacem ⟨⟨et⟩⟩ nulli unquam sententie concedentem omni libidini indulgere lingue intemperantiam ⟨⟨ac⟩⟩ temeritatem ⟨⟨prosequi⟩⟩ animadvertebatis cum vobis tantopere carus esset, ⟨⟨et tamen eum in vosmet ipsos armastis?⟩⟩ Tum ergo obsistere voluerunt cum alas eorum favore in mensas extulerat cum tantam fuerat fedissimis et obscenis facinoribus potentiam adeptus, ut etiam precep-

Johannes then says that when Auribelli used his authority, many betrayed him. But he still preferred to endure hardships rather than act contrary to faith and justice.[115] He is setting up a contrast here between faith and justice, on the one hand, and the authority of the magistrate, on the other. He then compares the sickness and death of one of the friars, Thomas Quercetanus, to moral decline; the consequence in both cases is death, either spiritual or corporeal.[116] The crisis is also revealed by various supernatural portents[117] and it is reflected in Johannes' annoying dreams and nocturnal thoughts,[118] in what seems

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tores suos quique illum ita evexerant, nulla superiorum beneficiorum recordatione, nulla gratia, nullaque pietate domo excludere auderet."

[115] *Ibid.*: "Ego autem in hac causa non modo illis obesse decrevi a quibus huius viri gratia multa pertulissem, sed cum ad hostes transfugere esset adlata potestas ⟨⟨non⟩⟩ ut plerique fecerunt ⟨⟨transfugi sed⟩⟩ malui cum eis hec ipsa incom⟨m⟩oda pati quam fidem et iustitiam violare."

[116] *Ibid.*, f. 35^{r}: "Qualis futura esset nostrarum rerum conditio in Thome Quercetani decessu amplissimo quodam et claro argumento omnibus nobis arbitror fuisse monstratum. Is enim proxima hyeme (ut scis) corpore toto erat infectus. Cumque uni fuissent ulceri unguenta apposita mox cetera erumpebant. Sicque tandem totus exulceratus morbo fedissimo consumptus est. Quid ergo aliud ⟨⟨nobis⟩⟩ eius invalitudo morsque presignabant? Profecto ac miserandis quibusdam vocibus (falsus utinam vates sim) adloquebant nostros. Ulcera corporis vestri ad id corruptionis venerunt ut nisi morte curari non possint."

[117] *Ibid.*, f. 35^{v}: "Eadem quoque hyeme cum Prati essemus. Prima hora noctis ad cenam consederant fratris. Inter cenam dum autem (mirabile dictu) vocem ex infimis quasi terre visceribus oppressam et conculcatam cum summa omnium admiratione atque horrore audiuimus gemitus quosdam teterimos edidisse. Eoque magis turbati qui aderant quod nec cognita vox nec verba illius satis intellecta fuere. Erant qui dicerent dolentis cuiusdam aut vocantis quempiam extitisse. Ceterum ut mi/c/hi visum. Ut caveremus edixerat. Tantus autem fuit omnium horror ut Alexander ipse Bononiensis quem letissimum nosti ac ceteri omnes pene cenam intermicterent illis quidem mirantibus aliis autem quae dicta fuissent que⟨⟨re⟩⟩ntibus. Omnium tamen una sententia fuit quod in posterum novi eam fore parituram. Ego vero tum domus nostre prefecturam tenebam. Isdem etiam fere diebus sacratissimum Christi corpus sepe e manibus sacerdotis ferebatur in terram fuisse collapsum. Neque vero his modo in summam suspitionem nostrarum rerum versi sumus."

[118] *Ibid.*, ff. 36^{r}–36^{v}: "In sompnio quoque turbatus sum. Videbar regium campum nostre religionis domum intrare primoque claustri ingressu armigerum militem offendere binis mucronibus me petentem. Nec retro cedendum apparebat. Ingente multitudine involvebar. Ergo altero ille frontem vulnerabat reliquo manus. His enim ne feriret alterorum consilii ignarus acceperam. Experge factus inmodice plurima mente versabam. Tandem vero capite ac membris me vulnerandum eo sompnio pronuntiabam. Eadem proinde nocte cogitationibus fatigatus sopore iterum oppressus. Domum nostram flammis conlucere. Insignesque tumultus ac discursiones ut in capta civitate fieri consuevit cernebam. Itaque his aliisque per multis he novitates premonstrate sunt que licet plurimum terroris incusserint nobis tamen documen ¶ [36^{v}] to michi vero utilitati amplissime extiterunt." See Anthony Grafton's discussion of the sta-

to be a foretaste of the third book. These dreams and thoughts lead Johannes to an analysis of the spiritual crisis.

The essential difference between the past and the present is a consequence of the decline in study of the Bible: better studies produced better people in the Dominican Order, and because of them the Order had grown and flourished in the past.[119] The notion that better studies produced better people is a humanist and a Dominican commonplace. The act of memory becomes a critical tool:

> Many [of these excellent Dominicans of the past] have receded from my memory. But some of them are so rooted in my mind that I shall remember them as long as I live.[120]

These great Dominicans of the past were distinguished in their study of the Scriptures and of Christian literature, on which everything else was founded: the house, the city, the province, and the Church.[121] This lament over the decline in the study of Scripture and in theology is a criticism of the present state of religion and of the members of the religious orders. Despairing of the present, Johannes commemorates the great men of the past. It is noteworthy that some of these distinguished Dominicans are praised for their erudition in *humanae litterae* or for their

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tus of dreams in sixteenth-century culture in his 'Reforming the Dream', in Christopher S. Celenza and Kenneth Gouwens [eds.], *Humanism and Creativity in the Renaissance. Essays in Honor of Ronald G. Witt* (Leiden 2006), pp. 271–292.

[119] *Ibid.*, f. 36^{v}: "Adversa enim vel huiusce modernis contraria et idcirco studia meliora tales viros nostre familie pepererunt quibus crevit et adolevit et enutrita et roborata est ut videmus."

[120] *Ibid.*: "Plurimi excesserunt e memoria. Sed non nulli ita animo insident meo ut eorum vivens nusquam obliviscar."

[121] *Ibid.*: "Ut Leonardi Statii ut Johannis Domenici ut Ubertini Albitij ut Stephani Mangiatroi ut Dominici Ristori utque Sinibaldi Aldigerii et aliorum / s / quamplurium qui omnes ante hanc nostram etatem clarissimi habiti sunt nostrarumque litterarum eruditissimi. Equidem ⟨his⟩ viris domus nostra, his civitas omnis, his provincia, his ecclesia innitebatur." The decline in biblical studies on the part of the Dominicans, that is, professional theologians, described here by Johannes, will be treated in chapter four below, where I discuss Pico's accusations against the professional theologians who were in the papal commission which condemned his theses, whom he blames for theological misunderstandings. On Leonardus de Datis, the son of Statius de Datis, see n. 112 above, and Kaeppeli, *Scriptores*… vol. 3, p. 73. On Giovanni Domenici see Kaeppeli, *Scriptores*… vol. 2, p. 406. On Ubertinus Bartolomaei de Albizis see Kaeppeli, *Scriptores* … vol. 4, p. 412. On Stephanus Mangiatori see Orlandi, *Necrologio*… vol. 1, p. 156; vol. 2, pp. 206–208, 390. On Dominicus de Ristoriis see Orlandi, *Necrologio*… vol. 1, p. 150; vol. 2, pp. 126–128; Piana, *La facoltà*… p. 449. On Sinibaldus Aldigerius see Orlandi, *Necrologio*… vol. 1, pp. 154–155; vol. 2, pp. 196–199; Piana, *La facoltà*… pp. 287, 450.

philosophical studies.[122] In Johannes' account the Order reached its culmination (*culmen*) with these great Dominicans of the past, and from now on we must expect descent rather than ascent.[123] For Johannes, the Church as an institution is in a continual state of collapse; and all the good men, from the time of pope Martinus V (1368–1431) until the recent past, have not worked hard enough to repair it.[124] One of these Dominican heroes mentioned here is Lorenzo Pisano (c. 1391–1465), the canon of the church of San Lorenzo in Florence, who was one of Ficino's teachers during the 1450s.[125] Johannes produces this long list of names, to document these men for the collective memory of the Dominican community, at a time in which their memory

[122] *Ibid.*, ff. 37^{r}–37^{v}: "Alius vero in ecclesiastem Salomonis et in canticis canticorum et in plerisque aliis ecclesiasticis libris et in caritatem et ad Coluccium Salutatum poetam nostrum virum certe humanissimum eruditissimos ac devotissimos libros edendos curavit. Cuius inter cetera memoratu digna illud fertur precipuum quod omnium pene meminisset quodque semel legisset semper memoria retineret quod etiam hic primus deperditam atque collapsam regularium disciplinam devotione ac sanctimmonie ¶ [37^{v}] sue exemplis intra Ytaliam instaurare perrexerit quod non minimum religionum nostrarum fuisse presidium existimandum reor. Albitius autem vir omnium illa etate doctissimus in Methaphisicam Aristotilis comentaria copiosissime scripsit. Itaque his quante humanitatis quante devotionis quanteve au/c/totitatis atque virtutis extiterint non in obscuro est." In this context even the *humanitas* of Albitius may imply a classical education. Caroli is referring here to Ubertino degli Albizzi's O.P., *Glosae super libros metaphysicae*, indeed quite a long commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which is still available only in manuscript form: Florence, biblioteca nazionale centrale, Conv. Soppr. E.4.22, ff. 1^{r}–176^{v}. See G.C. Garfagnini, M.R. Pagnoni Sturlese, G. Pomaro, S. Zamponi [eds.], *Catalogo di manoscritti filosofici nelle biblioteche italiane vol. 3 (Firenze, Pisa, Pistoia)* (Firenze 1982), pp. 53–54; Kaeppeli, *Scriptores*… vol. 4, pp. 412–413.

[123] *Ibid.*, f. 37^{v}: "Puto quidem tum domus et familie nostre culmen ut aiunt extitisse et ultimum/s/ad excellentiam gradum/s/quo demum descensum potius quam ascensum expectare possimus."

[124] *Ibid.*, f. 38^{r}: "Oddo/ex/Columpnesium Romana familia natus antiqua sane et honorata/c/in summum pontificem delectus deinde Martinus quintus appellatus est. Pontifex certe illa etate optimus ac felicissimus cuius eo presertim vivet permulta secula nomen quo eius e vita decessus. Solis eclypsi presignatus fertur. Id autem arbitror summa ratione confectum. Quonam enim modo fieri potiusset ut secus quam bonum ad reparandas ecclesie labentis ruinas viri tales tantique deligerent. Siquidem plurimos ipsi nos vidimus qui eorum monita et exempla prosequi decreverunt hos vel doctissimos vel devotissimos extitisse. Quales fuerunt Ieronimus Johannis, Andreas Ducci, Sebastianus Jacobi qui nuper e vita sublati sunt et is cuius supra totiens mentionem feci licet plurimum sciem minimum conscientie semper habuerit eorum plantula fuit." On Ieronimus Johannis see Kaeppeli, *Scriptores*… vol. 2, p. 248. On Andreas Ducci see Orlandi, *Necrologio*… vol. 1, p. 156; vol. 2, pp. 205–206. On Sebastiano Jacobi see Orlandi, *Necrologio*… vol. 1, pp. 163–164; vol. 2, pp. 227–241.

[125] *Ibid.*, f. 38^{v}: "Laurentius quoque Pisanus et alii plurimi horum ex numero erant qui tantorum patrum mores in/n/biberent quique longanimitate ac patientia sua et eruditione populorum animos inflammarent." For his relations with Ficino and his activity in general see Field, *The Origins*… pp. 136–137, 158–174. See also n. 12 above.

is under threat.[126] It is important to note that he is focused only on figures who played a part in the local Dominican community over the past two hundred years, leaving aside completely the 'standard' authoritative Doctors of the Church.

Johannes' personal account which follows can be regarded as the climax of the work as a whole:

> And so, when I recall the glory and virtue of the men of former times, and I shall omit mentioning others, and compare them to these [men of the present], I feel ashamed—I would say this *pace* everybody—that I was born into these times in which I see the labours and toils of so many men sink in one generation into the deep sea, as it were.[127]

The sense of a spiritual crisis is very apparent here. Johannes reveres these Dominicans of the past as vastly superior to those of the present.[128] He claims that the Order had always followed the destiny of the city;[129] so that when one is in crisis, a crisis in the other inevitably follows. Just as Johannes praises the erudition of these Dominicans, implying both *sacrae litterae* and *humanae litterae*,[130] so too he criticizes the behaviour of the Dominicans in Santa Maria Novella at the present. By the end of book two we have a witty remark which represents once again the relation and recurring analogy between political and religious institutions. Caroli reflects here the new law of January 1459 in which the priors of the Guilds (*Priori delle Arti*) were named the priors of liberty (*Priori di Libertà*). Now Caroli through Johannes presents a word-play on the words 'prior' and 'liberty': while praising the Florentine republic for honouring the priors of the Guilds with the name priors of liberty, he attacks the Dominicans of Santa Maria Novella for despising their own prior (i.e., Caroli himself), who struggled for the liberty of the Florentine monastery and for their own liberty.[131] He concludes that

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[126] See e.g., *ibid.*, ff. 39^{r}–39^{v}.

[127] *Ibid.*, f. 39^{v}: "Itaque cum superiorum virorum gloriam atque virtutem ut iam ceteros pretermittam ad memoriam refero hosque cum illis confero, pudet me, (pace omnium dixerim) / hoc tempore / ⟨⟨in hec tempora⟩⟩ esse natum, quo video tantorum virorum labores atque sudores una etate ut in pelagi profundo demergi."

[128] *Ibid.*, ff. 39^{v}–40^{r}: "Sed neque id arroganter dictum existimari velim, sed magis gratiam aperiendi amoris et desiderii mei quo in singulares homines animo feror. At pro ¶ [40^{r}] hoc dolor. Junior etas nostra / ac / propemodum lasciviens plurimos longe dissimiles attulit nobis."

[129] *Ibid.*, f. 40^{r}: "Quippe et civitatis fortunam semper illa domus secuta est."

[130] *Ibid.*, f. 40^{v}: "Sed iusta pia et sancta illis emulatio fuit morum litterarum atque virtutum. Qua in re eo studiosius insistebant quo hec affectio alteram / superare / viris gravibus et severis et litterarum eruditione clarissimis toto studio superaret."

[131] *Ibid.*, f. 41^{v}: "Nunc autem non artium priores superiori novitate sed libertatis

there is no tranquillity or stability in man's life in this world,[132] a claim which will be repeated in the third book by Dominici.

4. Liber dierum lucensium *Book Three*

The third book is very different from the first two books. Caroli apparently felt that the dialogue form was not sufficient for discussing the spiritual crisis. He was looking for a new mode of expression which could bridge the gap which he still felt between verbal accounts of the crisis and the painful reality of the situation. The third book contains Caroli's dream vision of the present crisis. His model was the *Somnium Scipionis*.[133] Yet even his dream vision of total destruction contains within it two orations or monologues, one by Dominici and the other by Antoninus, who attempt to interpret the vision and to console Caroli. We may note here that cardinal Giovanni Dominici (1357–1419) was among other things the "founder" of the Dominican observant reform movement in Italy in the end of the fourteenth century, and the Florentine archbishop Antonino Pierozzi (1389–1459) was among the leaders of this reform in Florence. What we have here, then, is a vision, together with two monologues, inside a dream, which is reported in a dialogue. The tension between the dream on the one hand, and words

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vocandum censuere. Talem itaque sillogismum fecerunt quo res publica dignior atque prestabilior quam maxime videretur. At religiosi omnes priorem inperfectiorem haberent. Domus quoque nostra ante eam quam retulimus novitatem priore contenta fuit." For a discussion of the law of January 1459 in the context of *Florentina libertas* see Rubinstein, *Studies in Italian History*… pp. 286–287 and n. 64 there. Thus, we can say that Caroli adds a new historical context, that of the religious orders in Florence, to Rubinstein's detailed historical account of the term liberty in Florentine political discourse on pp. 273–294.

[132] *Ibid.*, f. 42^{v}: "Tandem vero ex omnibus ante dictis illud clare certissimeque videbis nil in hac hominum vita quieti aut stabilis esse quin potius queque sub divo constituta preter caritatem divinam sane virtutem cetera omnia / necesse est / otius esse transitura."

[133] See Camporeale, "Giovanni Caroli—dal '*Liber dierum*'…" p. 218: "Liber tertius dierum lucensium eiusdem. Continet autem presentium temporum conditionem, ad modum *Sompnii Scipionis*." On Cicero's text (wrongly attributed in the Middle Ages to the fourth-century AD Latin writer Macrobius, the author of a popular commentary on this dream), see the introduction and the Latin text, with English translation and a commentary, by J.G.F. Powell [ed.], *Cicero: Laelius, On Friendship and The Dream of Scipio* (Warminster 1990), pp. 119–166. We know that Caroli copied several books for the library of Santa Maria Novella. Among these books we find *macrobius super de sompnio scipionis parvum*. See Stefano Orlandi, O.P., *La biblioteca di S. Maria Novella in Firenze del sec. XIV al sec. XIX* (Firenze 1952), p. 68.

and reason on the other, is emphasized in the beginning of the book, since the dream begins at the point where words are no longer sufficient. We are told that Johannes, who throughout the dialogue acts as Caroli's spokesman, was contemplating in his room the day before, agitated by illness, not by care, when a very powerful thought came to him in a dream. After the night had passed and the third day has arrived, Jacobus appears in his room as usual.[134] It is a pleasant day, and he wishes to go out of the monastery and take a walk. He asks Johannes why, while the other friars chose to go out to most pleasant places, only they, the two friars who were exiled from their monastery in Florence, should sit inside and take care of the house.[135] The implication is, I believe, that even though there is a serious crisis, it seems that not all the friars are aware of it, but rather very few. In fact, this is one of the reasons for the crisis. But is the concern for the state of religion and the religious orders restricted to the area of the monastery? Jacobus wishes to go out in order to get away from his worries and to relax in *spatia dulcissima*. For Johannes, however, the problems affecting the religious orders are not confined to *spatia monasterii*. On the contrary, he says:

> Indeed not at all—I said. Besides, I was expecting you very eagerly. Since the words are bursting forth and I can hardly hold them, [the words] which this night, while I was suspended, as I think, from both our former speech and thought, seems to have offered me. But this matter demands a freer space. Therefore if, as we used to do, it would be proper to go round the city so that the 'hostile witnesses' would be absent, [and thus] certainly we shall speak out in a safer and more plentiful manner.[136]

Johannes' notion regarding the idea of going out from the monastery is quite the opposite of Jacobus' intention. The words *at liberiorem locum ista res postulat* are very strong and indicate that Johannes is going to

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[134] *Ibid.*: "Egregiam atque prestantem diei superioris collationem qua in morbo, non cura, versati sumus, plurima ac digna cogitatio non absque horum temporum miseratione, sompno commisit. Ubi vero tertia dies affulxit, Jacobus ipse noster, votis religiose familie absolutis, cellam (ut sepe solebat) ingreditur."

[135] *Ibid.*: "Anne—inquid—fratribus nostris spatia dulcissima assumentibus, soli nos domus custodiam amplectemur? Siquidem nostrorum pars, nequaquam minima, regularium canonicorum monasterium—quod Fregionariam dicunt—eo die perrexerat. Sed et serenitas ipsa celi vieque comoditas nos aliquo ire suadet. Quam igitur domi sedebimus?"

[136] *Ibid.*: "Minime vero—inquam. Ceterum, te ardentissime expectabam. Erumpunt enim verba et vix illa retinere possum, que nox ista mihi, priori ut arbitror sermone pariter et cogitatione suspenso, detulisse visa est. At liberiorem locum ista res postulat. Quam ob rem si, ut facere consuevimus, urbem remotis arbitris circumgirare placuit, securius certe atque uberius proloquemur."

take with him the annoying concerns, or rather some greater concern, which it would not be safe to discuss inside the monastery or in the presence of other friars. Caroli creates a dramatic suspense in his readers, since we do not yet know what matters Johannes wants to discuss. We only know that they involve what Johannes saw in his dream, when the speech and thought of the former day had exhausted themselves. The words which burst forth (*erumpunt verba*) in his dream, in contrast to speech and thought (*sermo et cogitatio*), are not the product of dialogue or, on a more philosophical level, dialectic, but rather of a dream vision, arising from the depths of Johannes' soul. We should therefore assume that they reveal a more profound truth than what has so far been said in the dialogue. But the report of this dream vision will happen within the fictional frame of the dialogue. Johannes intends to discuss the crisis by describing his dream vision while he and Jacobus are taking their walk. Jacobus, however, is unaware of the change in plans, and he is still interested in the beautiful day outside.[137]

Johannes cannot restrain himself; and as soon as they leave the monastery and the city he begins to talk.[138] He starts with a historical account, using history as an instrument for analysing the present state of crisis by comparing it unfavourably with the past. The memory of great men, their actions and their way of life is at the centre of Johannes' historical account.[139] He says that he was running through the memory of the past in his mind while Jacobus was absent.[140] A contrast is thus set up between the memory of the past—emphasized by the frequency of words such as *commemoratio, memoria*, and *recordatio*—and the forgetfulness of the present. Jacobus, like the rest of the friars wanted to visit the *spatia dulcissima* in the present; but, for Johannes, the memory of the past is much sweeter than the present. He thinks of the past with admiration for the virtue, erudition, and mental capacities of those who had constructed (*construxissent*) "our vast and very dignified house and family", that is, the Dominican Order.[141] Memories of fathers of the

[137] *Ibid.*: "Jacobus: Ita, ut placet, efficito; modo hanc lucem gratissimam, que in lucensi civitate rarissima est, non amittamus."

[138] *Ibid.*: "Ut ergo vix domo et civitate excessimus, ita Johannes exorsus est…"

[139] *Ibid.*: "Praeclara sane commemoratio prestantium virorum, quam exacta dies attulit nobis, Jacobe frater, eorumque actus memoria digni et vita sole fulgentior, ita pridie mentem corripuere meam, ut longe mihi dulcior vel illa recordatio nostra quam nunc agimus vita foret."

[140] *Ibid.*: "Memoria enim, cum tu primum abisses…"

[141] *Ibid.*, pp. 218–219: "… velocissime percurrebam quam excellenti virtute, quanta eruditione qualive ingenio illi homines claruissent, nec aliqua ratione animo excedebat

past, he says, were brought to his mind by recent events.[142] He does not, however, refer to *prisci patres* of the Dominican Order. Instead, he mentions and praises Johannes Masius, cardinal Giovanni Dominici, and the Florentine archbishop, St Antonino, who died in 1459 and whom Caroli knew personally.[143] Evidently, for Caroli, the break with past tradition had occurred quite recently. Giovanni Dominici and St Antonino had attempted to reform the religious orders and religious life in Italy and especially in Florence during the last years of the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century. Caroli, who considered himself a follower of these two great reformers, tried to continue their efforts by adjusting traditional institutions and religious values to the changing political atmosphere in Florence, in an effort to reach a new concord between past and present and between the conflicting elements within the city-state. He failed. The *Liber dierum lucensium* is a literary account of this failure, which was the expression of the spiritual crisis in Florence during the second half of the century. The work also contains Caroli's solution: the historical account spoken by Johannes in which the rift between past and present is overcome. Exiled in Lucca, this was the only thing he could do.

The death of St Antonino, for Johannes, was more than the loss of a close and beloved master. It symbolizes his own personal crisis and a more general crisis of religion in his day.[144] From the description of

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cuiusmodi moribus et disciplina, quam pia et sancta—ut ita dicam—simplicitate et, preter menti insitam generositatem, quam clara etiam carnis nobilitate domum et familiam nostram amplissimam atque dignissimam construxissent."

[142] *Ibid.*, p. 219: "Occurrebant autem priscorum patrum monimenta preclara, que recentiora tempora preferebant…"

[143] *Ibid.*: "… ut sancta Johannis Masii ac simplicia vota; ut Cardinalis quondam nostri ardentissima verba humanitatis et sanctimonie plena; ut tandem Antonini Florentie pontificis, cuius ego laudibus saciari non possum, insignis humilitas cum dignitate. Qua pervagatione ita una ex parte fruebar, ut nil eo munere animo meo tum quidem posset prestari iucundius." On the personal relations between Caroli and Antoninus see Orlandi, *Necrologio*… vol. 1, p. 204: "Etatis autem sue [i.e., Caroli] cum annum curreret 20 factus est sacerdos a beato antonino archiepiscopo florentino et statim peracto cursu artium et theologie factus est magister studentium in conventu nostro florentino. in 28 autem anno a predicto Reverendissimo fuit magistratus et regens pluries fuit in conventu nostro." On Johannes Masius see Orlandi, *Necrologio*… vol. 1, pp. 152–153; vol. 2, pp. 167–171.

[144] *Ibid.*: "Que omnia tam et si mentem plurimum inflammarent, maxime tamen illud florentino antistite consequebar, quod eum ipse viventem perspexerim, quod eius oratione dulcissima frui, quod singula professionis huius quam teneo ornamenta sub illius dignitate adipisci quodque eius bene meritum corpus piis et ipse lacrimis prosequi tempore meo meruerim. Eo vero uberius parte altera flebam, quo absque primis

Antonino, Johannes moves on to recount his dream vision, emphasizing again the difference between the dream, which appeared suddenly from within, and the process of thinking and reasoning.[145] The dream detached Johannes from the *amara cogitatio* which had occupied him for most of the night. Yet there are worse things than a bitter thought. After a detailed description of a certain *domus* and *templum*, which had perfect beauty, order and disposition, we find that as with the *prisci patres*, all that now remains of them is a partial memory.[146]

Johannes describes an enormous mob gathered all around the house and temple, with no leader imposing control or order. The mob completely destroys both edifices, violently tearing down the walls and "dashing the living bricks to pieces with pickaxes".[147] The house and temple clearly represent Johannes' monastery, the Dominican Order, and the foundation of religion, all of which are being destroyed. So, on the one hand, we have the house and temple, which represent perfect beauty, order and disposition, and on the other, a state of total destruction. The opposition here is stark, between absolute good and absolute evil. We shall encounter a similarly stark opposition—between *diluvium* and *concordia*—in chapter two.

The mob had one aim: the destruction of the house. No one was able to drag them away, because they protected each other.[148] Johannes describes the different types of reaction on the part of those in the house. Some wept and moaned, raising their eyes in vain towards

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totius virtutis conclusionem in illo videre et hanc intempestive nobis extinctam non mediocriter nostris datum angebar."

[145] *Ibid.*: "Itaque hec aliaque generis eiusdem complectens animo, plurimum noctis in predulci pariter et amara cogitatione consumpsi nec prius cogitationi finem quam vigilie dedi. Ergo, ubi me ex longa vigilia dempsissimus sompnus corripuit, ecce dormienti mihi planities cultu egregio et ornatu mirabili ante oculos visa est."

[146] *Ibid.*, p. 220: "Uno quisque aspectu omnia domus secretiora lustrasset, pulcrumque fuit templi ac domus universe ordinem dispositionemque intueri. Sed non singula memoria ipse retinui. Plurima elapsa sunt memoratu certe dignissima."

[147] *Ibid.*: "Ingens hominum turba circa domum erat et templum, iamque valida manu domum angebant dispari tamen (ut videbatur) animo. Pars enim humilior, horribile dictu, domus et templi fundamenta nitebatur proferre, et proprio quilibet instrumento operi cepto assidens. Hii quidem dolabris vivos lapides frangere, alii iam confractos inde redimere, nonnulli plaustris exportare. Pars fragilibus astis ruentes pene muros retinere, quasi una omnia ruine servare disponerent. Reliqui omnes in fundamento ardentius insistebant, illud summa vi effodere properantes. Ea tam et si fieri hoc pacto viderem, sine duce tamen, sine imperio ac sine ordine, instar populi tumultuantis erant."

[148] *Ibid.*: "Nec erat qui eos inde avelleret, sese invicem tutabantur."

heaven.[149] Others were terrified not knowing how to cope in such a frightening state of affairs:

> Besides, being terrified and enervated, and not knowing enough about future events, they did not endeavour to drive away the impious [mob], or to call for help, or to liberate the house. Instead, they all stood pressed together with their hands almost folded.[150]

So, it was not only the mob outside the house which was responsible for the destruction, but also some of those inside, who did not do anything to protect it. This is a clear criticism of this group of people, who did not even protest. Johannes mentions a third group within the house: a few who, with a weak voice, demanded of the mob to explain why this madness had overpowered them; and content with having done this, they took to their heels without delay.[151] One faction of the mob wanted to destroy only part of the house; another wanted complete destruction.[152] They decided to join forces, however, and to destroy house and temple totally, so that "from then on things appeared far more wretched than they had before."[153] At this point the dream really becomes a nightmare. No one was touched any longer by compassion for this great house; they had all become impious and inhuman.[154] The state of indifference or panic on the part of the friars (the three groups

[149] *Ibid.*: "Superiores omnes quos adhuc mitior fortuna tenebat lacrimis obortis habundeque profusis domus sue casum miserabantur luminaque frustra sepissime tendentes ad celos."

[150] *Ibid.*: "Ceterum pavidi et enervati nec satis futurorum casuum gnari, non propellere impios, non auxilia convocare, non domum liberare curabant, sed plicatis pene manibus invicem conglobati omnes perstabant."

[151] *Ibid.*: "Pauci remi⟨⟨s⟩⟩siori voce illos impetebant, quid tanta insania eos invasisset postulantes, hisque contenti—nec mora—pedem referebant." It appears from this description that no group within the house was prepared to go on fighting. But Johannes himself did go on fighting and was expelled by force. Where is he (and Jacobus? And other likely supporters of Johannes'/Caroli's reforms) in this picture? Perhaps he was in the third group who at least protested, but gave in. Could this be what actually happened, or what Caroli now felt had happened, to his own supporters?

[152] *Ibid.*: "Ingens ibi tum oppugnatio fuit, mixtim utrisque certantibus, his domus partem excidere, illis vero partem suam tueri obstinatissime impigreque instituentibus."

[153] *Ibid.*: "Tum ergo omnes contulere manus comunique consilio pars utraque, ne iterum cederentur, in domus et templi excidium convenerunt. Quare longe miserabilior rerum deinde facies erat quam ante fuisset, cum omnes conditio una teneret, quod sine respectu, sine reverentia, tandem sine cuiusquam contentione rem conficiendam putarent. Nec minus desiderii in prosternenda domo diruendoque templo in posterioribus quam in primariis fuit."

[154] *Ibid.*, p. 221: "Neminem vel tangebat miseratio tante domus, impios omnes et inhumanos vidisses."

inside the house) was already implied in the words of Jacobus at the beginning of the book. Even those who were willing to confront the mob ran away after an initial protest; and the factions within the mob resolved their dispute in favour of total destruction.

Johannes now cites a modified version of a line from Virgil's *Aeneid* (*o fortunati quorum iam moenia surgunt*; I, 437):

> O unfortunate are those whose walls are now being ruined.[155]

The walls were ruined, and the battle to preserve the house and temple was lost. Johannes wonders what hope will be offered to these miserable men now.[156] Here, at the heart of the description of a Christian institution, the Dominican author quotes the pagan Virgil.

While Johannes watched the destruction, somebody (probably Jacobus) asked him if he was going to lend his hand to the destruction. Jacobus then described the efforts of the mob to raze the house down to its foundation.[157] This attempt to destroy its very foundations would test whether the men of old who constructed the house were right in believing that it would never fall, and that it would be the only house to endure for ever and ever.[158]

These words made Johannes anxious; but then he saw the three Dominicans mentioned ealier (Masius, Antonino, and Dominici). He cried profusely and for the first time was lost for words.[159] When he calmed down he asked the Dominicans for help:

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[155] *Ibid.*: "O infortunati quorum iam menia ruunt." One notes that what is now falling down are the walls. The walls after all were the last part of the house which some of the destroyers attempted to preserve. Now even they are falling down.

[156] *Ibid.*: "Mirabar autem quid spei demum miseris hominibus afferretur."

[157] *Ibid.*: "Cumque hec ipsa egerrime intuerer, te quoque parte altera prodeuntem agnovi, ultroque conlacrimans: Anne tu etiam manum dabis? Illi vero utrosque non hortabantur modo sed impellebant ad opus: Festinate viri, quid negligentie indulgetis? Nec instrumenta deerunt nec artes nec auxilia vobis. Omnes adsumus, omnes ardemus, nulla re minus quam aviditate hanc evetendi molem / a / egemus, nec soli tantum impetum substinere poteritis. Ceterum laborandum est, siquidem ni/c/hil facinori nostro, nisi fundamentorum firmitatem repugnare satis in promptu est. Igitur hic perstandum, his operosius enitendum" The words *te quoque… agnovi* can only refer in the context to the person who is addresed now by Johannes, that is, Jacobus. If this is so, one may conclude that Jacobus was not only one of Johannes' supporters, but someone who drew his attention to the destruction and encouraged him to resist.

[158] *Ibid.*: "Ita enim hanc veteres construxere, quasi numquam esset casura. Coronam effecimus. Credite nobis, nemo effugiet quilibet aut manum dabit aut loco excedet. Videre decrevimus an haec sola domus aeternitatem pre aliis sibi constituat. Quid vobis ⟨⟨consilii⟩⟩ capiendum sit, videtote. Illi deinde concitato animo ruebant in opus."

[159] *Ibid.*: "Hic ergo cum anxius perstetissem, tris viros, candida veste more nostro

> O fortunate men, you who are associated in [your] mind with the eternal and sacred flames, and now enjoy perpetual and true life, and you who, connected to that supreme God through an indissoluble bond, can ask nothing of Him which you will not worthily obtain. We beseech you to be present in spirit. How can you allow the affairs of men to be ruined and everything to be destroyed in this way, and pretend that nothing of these matters below is of concern to you? Why do you not run to the aid of the house with your resources, [the house which] has now, first of all, been demolished and which in a little while will tumble to the ground in a wretched collapse?[160]

Here, in this dramatic moment, Johannes introduces the question of providence: how could such horrible things have happened? Noticing the pained faces of the Dominicans yet another question arises: do they suffer even though they are now in heaven, and should be blessed, according to a prophecy, with eternal joy?[161] Does the destruction of a great Christian institution indicate a threat to the foundations of Christianity itself? Johannes still believes in the power of these Dominicans to help, and he encourages them to use their power against three dangers: impious calamities, evil omens, and men who must be returned to sanity from their furious madness.[162]

Dominici, the first of the Dominicans to speak, begins by denying that there is any threat to their eternal peace.[163] He goes on to explain, using scholastic terminology, the difference between their enjoyment of

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ornatos, egregia quidem forma, ceterum mestissimo vultu, astitisse mihi cernebam. Hos ubi aspexi, lacrimis perfusus, verba exprimere tum primum nequibam. Ex his alterum venerando aspectu et pontificatus honore personeque humilitate agnovi; alios ymaginatio (ut videbatur) et superiores cogitationes mee ac verba, quia de his essem locutus, qui forent prodebant."

[160] *Ibid.*: "O felices viri, qui sempiternis ac sanctis ignibus mente sociati, perpetua nunc et vera vita fruimini, quique summo illi deo indissolubili nexu coniuncti ni/c/hil ex eo optare potestis quod digne / ipsi / non consequeremini, adeste precamur animo. Quid ita res hominum labi omniaque prosterni permictitis, / o / et dissimulatis quasi ni/c/hil ad vos haec inferiora pertineant? Quid non succurritis vestra ope domui, nunc primum excise ac paulo post ad solum lapsu misero proruende?"

[161] *Ibid.*: "Quid vero facies vestras dolore mestitiaque confectas aspicio? Anne (ut in nobis) ita et apud celicolas locum obtinere passiones possunt? Sed laetitiam sempiternam [Is 61,7, not as Camporeale 51,1, which is probably a copying mistake] iustis mentibus adfuturam, beatissimus propheta predixerat."

[162] *Ibid.*, p. 222: "At non tam miseratione quam auxilio opus est: fata potius impia propellenda, infesta signa loco imminentia abigenda, hominesque tandem a tam seva dementia revocandi sunt."

[163] *Ibid.*: "Nulla nos—inquit alter eorum qui purpureo pileo eminebat—nec tenet passio nec in posterum tenere poterit unquam. Beata nos pace ac tranquilitate in aeternis montibus perfruemur."

laetitia sempiterna, which is *essentiale*, and their sad faces at present, which is *accidentale*.[164] The responsibility for human matters does not lie with divine providence but with men's behaviour, their disregard of taking care of things, and their will.[165] In other words, the administration of religious institutions is men's responsibility and has nothing to do with God or the Fates.[166] Dominici then attacks those whom he considers responsible for the crisis:

> Yet it is they who spin the thread with unremitting exertion. It is they who select a dire destiny of the Fates with regards to themselves. They, who should have strengthened the defences with every care, destroy them. No one therefore can justly accuse God, the stars, and, finally, us.[167]

Dominici is clearly criticising those who were in charge of religious institutions: those whose duty it was to strengthen these institutions are accused of bringing this dire fate down on themselves, as we have already seen in Johannes' report of this dream.

Dominici continues by appealing to Johannes:

> In everything which needs to be done, keep this alone in mind: neither the Fates, nor men, nor finally the stars can do anything when you fear God, when you seek only his honour, when you remember that you are a man of religion, when you place always before your eyes not a private cause but rather a common one.[168]

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[164] *Ibid.*: "Nihil apud nos essentiale (ut dicitis) augeri vel minui potest. Accidentale quiddam, forte si bonum sit, non dedignamur, malum omnino exclusum est."

[165] *Ibid.*: "Permictimus autem res hominum labi, si illud ipsi moribus suis efficiant, si rebus / sui / prospicere negligant, postremo si ita velint. Neque enim nolentibus et invitis, et tum maxime contrariis exercitationibus implicatis cum periculis occurrendum foret, opem ferre nostris permissum est. Vix illud deo, qui animis imperat, linquitur."

[166] *Ibid.*: "Fata ergo ista non deus ipse nec revolutio illa parcarum efficit." It appears that although Johannes is thinking of the Christian God, the terms in this sentence are Virgilian. The words *revolutio illa parcarum* are reminiscent of Virgil *Aen.* I, 22: *sic volvere Parcas*, which signifies an irreversible decree. A few lines earlier, in line 18 we have: *si qua fata sinant*, implying that the *fata* are more flexible than the *Parcae* and do not issue irreversible decrees. It is fairly clear that Caroli, when writing Johannes' lines, had this passage from the very beginning of Virgil's *Aeneid* very much in mind. Whether his understanding of the difference between these two kinds of fate is faithful to Virgil's conception of them should not concern us here. I owe this observation to John Glucker.

[167] *Ibid.*: "At ii inremisso studio fila revolvunt, ii diram fatorum sortem in se ipsos legunt, ii presidia diruunt, qui illa omni diligentia cofirmare debuissent. Non ergo deum iure, non sydera, non ad extremum nos ipsos accusare quisquam potest." The expressions in the first two clauses again echo the Virgilian terminilogy: see last note.

[168] *Ibid.*, p. 223: "Tu autem in omni re conficienda, id solum mente custodito: nec fata, nec homines, postremo nec ista sidera quicquam possunt ubi deum metuas, ubi eius honorem modo expostules, ubi te religiosum memineris, ubi non privatam sed

For Dominici, order and stability must be based on both religious values and political practice. The fact that preferring the common cause is placed in the same list as fearing and honouring God and remembering one's religious commitment is evidence that for Dominici—as presented in Caroli's dialogue—the religious crisis is inseparable from the political one and therefore the solution to this crisis must also have both a religious and a political dimension. It is not man, who is weak and mild, who will restore your native land (*patria*) and your home to you, but rather God, says Dominici.[169] The use of *patria* and *domus* here instead of *templum* and *domus* is significant, since *patria* has both religious and political implications. And here again a Virgilian image is used:

> Yet I see that, as for Priam, so for you, the Palladium was taken away together with [his] country, and thus I am very much afraid that, just as his kingdom could not exist without the Palladium, so too yours cannot. Therefore, make sure that what I shall now say does not escape from your memory. After your native land has been restored, it should be administered and regulated, not with spite nor with loathsome dissimulation, nor with excessive haste, but rather with counsel, prudence, and faith, if it is true that the Roman state was once, as they say, restored by delaying. If you act differently and wish to deal with [this] matter hastily rather than taking your time, regard this case of yours as completely lost. But of all things which were previously said, you should hold this Christian up as a sign [or confirmation] when you see him shamefully cast out from his magistracy.[170]

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com⟨m⟩unem causam semper tibi ante oculos ponas." The expression *communis causa* may refer only to the cause of the Dominican Order. But the frequency of political terms in conjunction with religious ones in this speech (e.g., *patriam… domumque*), together with the Virgilian imagery may indicate that *communis causa* has also political undertones.

169 *Ibid.*: "Homo certe mitis ac lenis, et utinam non plus aequo. In deo tamen magis quam in hominibus spem sibi constituet, proinde fortasse eius virtute ac lenitate nemo illi eam palamam eripiet. Hic patriam vobis domumque restituet."

170 *Ibid.*: "Cerno tamen ut Priamo ita et vobis, palladium cum patria fuisse ablatum. Itaque vereor plurimum ne, quemadmodum Priami regnum absque palladio stare non potuit, ita et vestrum. Que ergo nunc dixero, cave ne excidant memoria. Non livore post restitutam patriam, non dissimulatione feda, non nimia celeritate, sed consilio prudentia et fide gerenda ac temperanda res est, siquidem cunctatione quandoque romana res restituta fertur. Si secus egeritis et celeritate non tempore rem occupare volueritis, actum omnino de re vestra putate. Omnium autem, que ante relata sunt, ut signum suscipito christianum illum cum videris turpiter de magistratu eiectum." The words *cunctatio* and *romana res restituta* are a reference to Quintus Fabius Maximus Cunctator, who saved Rome by delaying. Caroli is echoing the famous hexametric line of Ennius about Quintus Fabius: *Unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem* (*Annales* XII, 363),

Dominici here draws an analogy between the mythical destruction of Troy and the present destruction of religious and political systems and institutions. Both had lost the *Palladium*, the image of wisdom, which in this context represents the knowledge of proper government.[171] This is the reason for their destruction according to Dominici. New institutions, therefore, should be established with *consilium, prudentia* and *fides*, following the ancient precedent of the 'restoration' of the Roman state by the prudence and delaying tactics of Quintus Fabius Cunctator. Once again religious and political values—or religion and politics—are intertwined.

The final outcome of all this destruction is known only to God, Dominici replies in answer to Johannes' question, and those who are responsible for it will certainly be punished for their insanity.[172] When Johannes asks whether this state will ever be repaired, Dominici is pessimistic: *ut magis dissolutio ex his quam reparatio expectari posit.*[173] There is no hope for the present generation. Noticing Johannes' reaction to his words, Dominici smiles and explains in greater detail his attitude towards the history and destiny of human institutions.[174] In his view, crisis and instability should be regarded as a natural and constant state of human affairs and institutions, of kings, cities, nations, and families—in fact, of everything which occurs in the sublunary world.[175] So there

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which is frequently quoted by Cicero, Seneca and Macrobius, from whom Caroli must have picked it up.

The Christian who was shamefully cast out from his magistracy is Marziale Auribelli—the man who had removed Caroli from his office, and has been removed from office himself. Note that Caroli uses the Roman political term *magistratus* for a purely religious office.

171 The *Palladium* in this context is the statue of Pallas Athena in Troy. The Trojans believed that the safety of their city depended on the presence of this image. According to most versions of the Trojan story, including that of Virgil, to which we have already seen a number of verbal and concealed refrences in this book, Ulysses and Diomedes stole this image from its temple in Troy, and its absence was one of the causes for Troy's fall and destruction. Athena was among other things the goddess of wisdom, and this is the quality which Caroli emphasizes here. On f. 47^{v} we have Caroli's marginal note: *Pallas dea sapientie antiquis fuit. Itaque palladium, id est sapientiam.*

172 Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli—dal '*Liber dierum*'…' p. 223: "… quis—inquam—huius quod cernimus excidii finis erit? Deo notus—inqui/d/t. Ceterum in eos ruet, qui illud efficiunt. Penas certe insanie dabunt."

173 *Ibid.*, p. 224.

174 *Ibid.*: "Cumque his uberius flerem, tum ille arridens ait…"

175 He also refers to a theme which we frequently encounter in classical Latin literature: the inevitable decline and fall of powreful people and institutions: the higher they arise, the greater their fall. See e.g., Seneca, *Phaedra* (*Hippolytus*), 1124–1140. Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli—dal '*Liber dierum*'…' p. 224: "… et quis aliud in rebus humanis

is nothing new or surprising in this present crisis. But still he contrasts men of the present with those of the past. Although he admits that certain things which he disapproves of also happened in the past, he says that they can be treated as discarded bilge water, for they were covered over and made tolerable by the good practices of many and by the best studies.[176] The men of the present, however, are shadowy and empty images of those men of the past.[177] The result of this rift was that the bilge water overflowed and spread everywhere, so that no place was not contaminated by filth.[178] Consequently, it is the duty of those who wish to repair and to restore their institutions to pay attention, if not to every detail, at least to some of them.[179] In reply to Johannes' request for a remedy, Dominici says that the solution to this crisis is in the hands of those who are now destroying everything. As to how precisely such a crisis can be resolved, he refers to the next speaker, Antonino, "the living stone" whom Johannes knew in person.[180]

These are Dominici's last words, and they point forward to the subject of the next speech: how to resolve, or at least to cope with, the crisis. Dominici had focused on analysing the reasons for this crisis, maintaining that a continual state of instability, sometimes accompanied by a break between past and present, was part of the *conditio*

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umquam vidit, nisi finem et obliquitatem? Nec minor curvitas quam rectitudo est. Quo circa quantum quisque evehitur, quantumve dignificatur, tantum / deiciatur / ruat tantumve fedetur necesse est, ut par sit elationi descensus. Sic et regum et urbium et populorum ac familiarum clara atque lata imperia incurvata ac tandem extincta sunt. Nusquam stabilitas esse potest, nusquam firmitas, nusquam rectum sine obliquo vidisti. Ubi lune imperium, ibi mobilia et desinentia omnia."

176 Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli—dal '*Liber dierum*'…' p. 124: "Superiori deinde tempore, etsi non nulla fierent in domo ista que non probarem ea tamen ut in sentina proiecta vidisses. Bonis certe multorum exercitationibus optimisque studiis illa tegebantur: ut publicis institutis, ut litterarum excellentissimis disciplinis, ut etiam nobilitate carnis. Et immo illa tollerabiliora in illis hominibus habebantur."

177 *Ibid.*: "Horum vix umbram quamdam et inania simulacra hii hodie retinent, unde et fenum et aridam terram subicientes vidisti."

178 *Ibid.*: "Itaque tamdiu res quievere, quamdiu sentina completa est. Ubi vero nil loci non fedati relictum, erumperent cetera et extra prodirent omnia necessarium fuit."

179 *Ibid.*: "Quam ob rem si non ad singula, saltem / no / ad nonnulla revertendum his est, si rem suam resarcire iterumque reparare disponant." This is not the only time where Caroli uses *res*, with its political undertones, for a religious institution.

180 *Ibid.*: "O gratissima celo lumina—⟨⟨inquam⟩⟩—que olim et hanc domum luce clarissima illustrastis, quis remediis tanto casui occurrendum putatis, queso edicite. Eisdem—inquit—quorum nunc contraria cernis. Vivos hii lapides frangunt, efferunt, exportant; eosdem resolident, conducant inque fundamento reponant, oportet, siquidem contrariis curari contraria putant. Quo autem pacto id fieri queat et debeat, hic, quem semper ipse ac viventem lapidem in vita vidisti, dignissime tibi aperiet."

humana. Above all, the situation was not the responsibility of God, but rather of man, who had not administered religious and political institutions adequately, leading to a decline in both religious and political values. The question of providence, implied in the first set of questions which Johannes addressed to these three Dominicans, was therefore irrelevant. Dominici concentrated on explaining the human reasons for the crisis. Caroli, through Dominici's speech, emphasized that this was a crisis of religious institutions rather than of religion in general. As for the second set of questions posed by Johannes, concerning how to resolve this crisis, it is the task of St Antonino to provide the answers.

He begins by presenting his programme for rebuilding the house:

> Therefore, in the first place, if it seems that [this] institution should be restored, the sun, which you see setting, should be recalled. Then, I think that living stones should be placed in the foundation and that only afterwards should the superstructure be erected. One should indeed strive with so much diligence in all these matters that nothing which has been permitted to us would be judged by anyone to have been neglected; for virtually every mediocrity must be foul indeed in a religious man. Finally, there will be a total discipline of virtue and sanctity, so that we foresee everything which is suitable to a religious man, with nothing, not even the smallest matter, neglected.[181]

Antonino's programme consists of three elements: *sol*, *vivi lapides*, and *superhedificare*. This symbolic language will be interpreted in the course of his speech. The setting sun mentioned here was already described in Johannes' vision of the destruction of the house and temple.[182] Every detail is important, since for Antonino, echoing II Cor 4, 7, there is a connection between the *hedificium spirituale constructum* in which *thesaurus noster* is located, and the *fictilis arx*.[183] Earthly institutions therefore must be built with great care, since they contain *thesaurum nostrum*—in other words, they also have a spiritual aspect and function.

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[181] *Ibid.*, pp. 224–225: "Principio igitur, si restituenda res esse videatur, solem, quem occidere vides, revocandum; deinde vivos lapides in fundamento iaciendos; postremo superhedificandum censeo. In his vero omnibus tanta diligentia enitendum, ut nihil, quod fieri nobis permissum sit, neglectum fuisse omnium sententia iudicetur. Omnis enim pene mediocritas religioso viro et vere sordida esse debet. Ea demum omnis erit virtutis et sanctimonie disciplina, ut omnia prospiciamus, que religiosum decent, nulla vero vel minima negligamus." Note that *restituenda res* in the first sentence is another reminiscence of the verse of Ennius cited in n. 170.

[182] *Ibid.*, p. 219: "Neque vero locum solis directus fulgor ⟨⟨illustrabat⟩⟩, at subrubens et obliqus, ut cum ad occasum flectit exiles radios / dif/fundens/at/."

[183] *Ibid.*, p. 225: "… sed cum hedificium fuerit spirituale constructum, tunc eo presertim circa minima vigilandum, quo meminerimus thesaurum nostrum fictili arce com-

The sun, according to Antonino, stands for *caritas*, the most important virtue and the exemplar of all virtue and probity; as with the sun, when men are deprived of this virtue, they cannot function effectively.[184] It is important to note that *caritas* as described and defined by Antonino is not only a religious but also a social and political virtue: "that which we call benevolence or friendship or rather *caritas*." For Antonino, in this context, *caritas* seems to be closer to *amicitia* or φιλία than to the biblical ἀγάπη.[185] He continues:

> It is no wonder, therefore, that when the sun of *caritas* disappears they would love neither [their] native land nor [their] house nor themselves.[186]

Restoring *caritas* as both a religious and a political virtue is consequently the first step towards a resolution of the crisis.[187] Antonino indicates two

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missum, quam minimus lapis effringere atque momento conterere potest." The Vulgate of II Cor 4, 7 reads: "habemus autem thesaurum istum in vasis fictilibus ut sublimitas sit virtutis Dei et non ex nobis."

[184] *Ibid.*: "Ego, fratres karissimi, nil aliud (cum diligentius intueor animo) cause esse puto, quid hec tam acerba et crebra vobis mortalibus accidant ⟨⟨mala⟩⟩, nisi quod ea virtute, que caeteras parit et fovet, omnino caretis: hanc benivolentiam seu amicitiam vel potius Caritatem dicimus. In ea omnium forma ac ratio constituta est; ipsa totius virtutis et probitatis exemplar existit. Ubi adfuerit ni/c/hil inconsulte, ni/c/hil inordinate ni/c/hilque improbe fieri cogitative potest. Ubi defuerit omnia secus accidant necesse est. Ut enim absque solis fecundi⟨⟨ta⟩⟩te ni/c/hil apud ⟨⟨vos⟩⟩ effici generarive solet, ita sine Caritate nec concipi nec nasci nec conservari quicquam credendum est. Neque / enim / nunc de virtutum umbris sed de veris hac oratione proloquimur." In I Cor 13, 13 we read: "nunc autem manet fides spes caritas tria haec maior autem his est caritas." But Caroli connects *caritas* not with the two other Pauline virtues, but with *benevolentia* and *amicitia*. Here he must have in mind also a pagan text which contains the three words together, Cicero, *De amicitia* 20: "est enim *amicitia* nihil aliud nisi omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum cum *benevolentia* ac *caritate* summa consensio." One notes again how a pagan allusion is grafted on to a central Christian concept. It is no accident that, although *De amicitia* is not a political text, the terms quoted from it recieve political overtones from the general context. Altogether it appears that ancient Roman allusions, which are so frequent here, are taken in the context of the ancient Roman state, whose positive aspects should serve as models for the institutions of the Roman Church.

In Cicero's context, *benevolentia* is the emotion of good will towards a friend. Following βούλεσθαί τινι… ἀγαθά in Aristotle's definition of τὸ φιλεῖν as a πάθος in *Rhet.* II, 4, 1380b35–36. But in other contexts already in Cicero himself, *benevolentia* has clear social and political connotations.

[185] *Ibid.*: "Caritas omnis veraque amicitia profugit."

[186] *Ibid.*: "Non ergo mirum si sole Caritatis abeunte nec patriam nec domum nec se ipsos diligant / possunt/."

[187] *Ibid.*: "Itaque revocanda Caritas est, semovendi vero defectus omnes, ut terra ista, quam cernimus, uberrimas fruges, idest, sanctissima ut quondam lucis opera abiectis tenebris proferre proximo tempore possit."

ways for this to be achieved. The first consists in beseeching God more devotedly with prayer to bring about the necessary changes within us.[188] But Antonino is more interested in the second way: making a supreme effort, with all our heart, to generate the virtue of *caritas* in ourselves.[189] So, although both Dominici and Antonino, in Caroli's dialogue, emphasize God's will as a necessary condition for restoring order, they stress man's responsibility to draw on virtues such as counsel, prudence, faith, together with the Christian virtues, in seeking a human solution to a situation brought about by human vice and negligence.

Antonino then elaborates the second way of restoring *caritas*. He turns his attention towards those who were impeded from preventing the destruction of the house and accuses them for not looking to their eternal afterlife, and, echoing I Cor 11, 30, of being asleep in their minds,[190] so that having been rendered insensible, they did not act against those who destroyed the house.[191] They are therefore charged with neglecting the love of posterity and despising the soul.[192]

Antonino continues by stating that the first founders did not create such *cetus, congregationes*, and *conventus* in order to have them demolished in one fell swoop.[193] We need to keep in mind that all these forms of

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[188] *Ibid.*: "Uno quidem, si oratione deum devotius exoremus, ut in nobis / ipse / liberalitate sua efficiat, quod faciundum ipse instituit."

[189] *Ibid.*, pp. 225–226: "Altero, si studio nostro hanc ipsi comparare virtutem toto desiderio enitamur."

[190] *Ibid.*, p. 226: "Vos itaque, o carissimi filii (convertebatur autem ad eos quos in evertenda domo impeditos videbam) obtusa nimium ingenia fertis. Quippe omnes natura eternos se vel in posteris efficere curant, ubi vos eternitatem, pro qua summa ope niti debueratis, abicitis. Quo circa, ut Apostolo placet, vos profecto mente dormitis." In the verse quoted, we do not have *mente*. This is probably Caroli's own sense of this expression in this context.

[191] *Ibid.*: "Vos iam ut insensibiles facti, nec in faciem cedentes propellitis nec devorantibus repugnatis nec malo animo blandientes advertitis nec maiorem in modum elatos deicitis."

[192] *Ibid.*: "Ita vero rem hanc vestram absolvere properatis, quasi ni/c/hil ad vos posteritatis amorem pertinere putetis. Vitam vestram tanto tamque inconsulto labore afficitis, animam quoque contempnitis, ut sine corporis molestia paucissimis diebus vivatis."

[193] *Ibid.*: "Satius certe fuerat gloriam, qua nos fruimur, mente et animo intueri. Neque enim propterea primi parentes nostri hos cetus, has congregationes hosque conventus tanto labore fieri voluerunt, ut ea omnia uno tumultu quassata proruerent." *Cetus* seems to be a more general term for a meeting, while *congregationes* and *conventus* are more technical and refer to different forms of assemblies and organizations inside the Dominican Order. The congregations or vicariates, which played such an important role in the Dominican observant reform movement in Italy during the fifteenth century, were goverened by a vicar and were common in the Order after the fourteenth century.

organization are related to the realization of *caritas* in society and in politics, which was said to be an essential foundation for the rebuilding of the house and the native land, and thus, for reestablishing both religious and political institutions. Antonino contrasts these older forms of assemblies, ceremonies, and organization with those of the present day:

> But you do not conduct communal gatherings in the manner in which they were instituted. And just as you oppose many of your teachers in them, so you consider nowadays that they were constituted only for the sake of outward form and appearance. But they [i.e., the first fathers—the founders of religious orders and the native-land] had set them up for the purpose of restoration, of confirmation, for the praise of God, and the splendour of the whole Order.[194]

He continues:

> But in this matter lies complete destruction and ruin. Believe me, unless this matter is repaired, you will certainly exert yourselves in vain. It is not enough for great assemblies to be held, for enormous houses to be constructed, [and] for many laws to be laid down, unless all these things are also preserved by justice, faith, and sanctity. For the laws, too, are virtually dead, even though they are most just, precisely where they are disregarded due to the idleness and sluggishness of the older generation. For indeed, if I may use our terms, these men have ended up becoming sensual and certainly much softer than women.[195]

They resembled the provinces but were more restricted in their rights and privileges. Some of them had no fixed territory. See *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. 4 (New York 1984), p. 244.

[194] *Ibid.*: "Sed et com⟨m⟩unes adunationes vestras non ea qua instituta sunt ratione celebratis. Utque in his preceptoribus vestris multis / e / ⟨o⟩fficitis, ita hoc tempore solum pro forma seu spetie res constitutas arbitramini. Illi vero ad reparationem, ad confirmationem, ad divinam laudem ordinisque universi decus ea decreverant."

[195] *Ibid.*: "In hac autem re omnis labes atque ruina posita est. Credite nobis, nisi res ista reparetur, nequicquam certe laborabitis. Nec satis est cetus fieri magnos, domos extrui amplissimas, creberrimas leges condere, nisi etiam iustitia fide sanctimoniaque serventur. Sed et leges fere mortue sunt quamquam iustissime ubi maiorum inertia ac segnitie obmittantur. Namque, ut nostris nominibus utar, isti homines sensuales effecti, femminis molliores certissime evaserunt." *Iustitia*, Greek δικαιοσύνη, is one of the four cardinal virtues of pagan antiquity, and it did not receive any additional meaning in Christian language. But in biblical and religious language in general, God is *iustus*, He is the supreme *iudex*, and He requires *iustitia* of man. *Sanctimonia* may be in this context a distant descendant of Greek ὁσιότης, which is related to the gods, but consists of purly human activities (see Plato's *Euthyphro*). ὁσιότης comes near enough to being considered as a cardinal virtue in some Platonic texts (e.g., *Gorgias* 507a5–c7: for similar passages see the comment on b2, in E.R. Dodds [ed.], *Plato Gorgias* (Oxford 1959), p. 336), and is clearly counted in lists of the main virtues frequently in the works of Philo. In Latin the

Antonino is aware of the political circumstances in which, without *iustitia*, *fides*, and *sanctimonia*, many good laws and the best political structures are useless. These values or virtues are again being used in both a religious and a political sense. He claims that the religious orders were established solely for the sake of devotion to God and of mutual support and honour, and that they were obliged to do this *liberius* and *commodius*.[196] Antonino explains the foundations of religious orders and monasteries by citing Ps 132, 1 and interpreting it in the light of religious virtues such as *caritas, fides, devotio, spes*, and *obedientia*, through which the same institutes and laws—under the same father and master—would be restored.[197] Implying that political practices and institutions should be restored in the same way as religious ones, he sets up a comparison between religious and civic *capitula*, arguing that both monasteries and cities require good management. The principle of *communis res* is essential in both religious and civic institutions.[198]

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connection between *sanctitas* and *sanctus* gives it also a religious flavour. *Fides* is Greek πίστις, and in pagan antiquity it signified faithfulness or credibility. But already in *NT* and early Christian literature it was used in a clearly religious sense.

[196] *Ibid.*: "Nulla igitur alia mihi ratione fratrum conventus seu congregationes, tanta magnificentia tantoque ordine instituta videntur, nisi quo liberius atque com⟨m⟩odius summo illi deo deserviant sibique mutuo adiumento sint atque honori."

[197] *Ibid.*, pp. 226–227: "Delectatus spiritu ⟨⟨propheta⟩⟩ est hisce locis, que greci cenobia dicunt, cum in psalmo canebat: Ecce quam bonum et quam iocundum habitare fratres in unum [Ps 132, 1]. In uno scilicet caritatis affectu, in una fide, in una devotione; spe quoque non alia quam perhennis vite gaudia consequendi, sub eisdem institutis, in eisdem legibus, sub eodem patre ac preceptore obedientiam antepromissam promtissime reddere."

[198] *Ibid.*, p. 227: "Sed et com⟨m⟩unes illas conventiones, quas capitula nuncupamus, eadem ratio facit. Eodem⟨⟨que⟩⟩ illas animo fieri ⟨⟨arbitremur oportet⟩⟩, *quo et in rebus publicis contiones ac civium optimorum convocationes videmus*. Itaque ut in his, si de com⟨m⟩uni populorum salute ac statu agendum, si in conciliandis civium animis opera conferenda, si fortissimis viris pro bene gestis rebus premia constituenda ⟨⟨sique⟩⟩ perditissimis aut pene decernende aut certe bonis habende gratie censeantur, in contionem *com⟨m⟩uniter* homines advocantur, ita pro similibus rebus vos ipsi vestra capitula celebratis. Pertinet autem ea *com⟨m⟩unicatio* rerum ad optimam civium societatem et pacem, refertque plurimum si *com⟨m⟩uni de re com⟨m⟩uniter* disseratur." Note the emphasis on doing things together for the sake of a common institution (*res communis*) and deliberating together on *res communis*. The line between political and religious practices is blurred; moreover, in the first clause which I italicized in this passage, political institutions are held up as an example for religious ones. Camporeale justly refers here to A.H. Thomas O.P. [ed.], *Constitutiones antiquae ordinis fratrum praedicatorum (1215–1237)* (Leuven 1965), pp. 44–58; and to R. Creytens, '*Les Constitutions des Frères Prêcheurs dans la Rédaction de s. Raymond de Peñafort (1241)*', in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* XVIII (1948), pp. 5–68; especially pp. 54–62 (dis. 2a, nn. VI–IX).

Antonino's discussion of the right way of conducting affairs clearly contains echoes of Caroli's controversy with Auribelli. Good management enables us to live peacefully in the world, despite the variety of souls, wills, and desires.[199] He contrasts *religionis habitus* with *tyrampnorum mos*, and *consilium* with *auctoritas*,[200] arguing that:

> The common cause goes badly indeed when the leader himself overflows with the sense of his own importance.[201]

The common cause is again at the centre here. There is no need, Antonino claims, to provide examples showing that there is great dignity in assembling together and a great advantage in consulting one another.[202] Without such practices neither cities nor nations, families, or houses could survive, whereas empires and republics flourished when these practices flourished. Antonino refers to these practices as *illum institutum* and *hec publica disciplina*, contrasting them with *unius arbitrium*, which leads to crisis and destruction.[203] He then lists three things—native land, friends, and religion—which all human beings should make every effort to preserve and strengthen, rejecting and detesting what is opposed to them.[204] Yet again politics and religion are bound together. Nothing releases men's souls from the bonds of benevolence

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[199] *Ibid.*: "Quo fit, ut his studiis atque artibus pacifice in mundo vivamus, in tanta animorum voluntatum studiorumque varietate, cum omnia quisque in capitulo, ut dicitis, melius disponenda ac reformanda expectet."

[200] *Ibid.*: "Itaque non ideo religionis habitu honestati sumus, ut tyrampnorum more queque ad semetipsos referentium in domibus nostris vivamus, sed ut quosque promeritis honorantes, *aliorum potius consilio quam propria auctoritate* feramur." The words italicized continue the idea of *communitas* and expand it to include a *propria auctoritas* for each monastery. This is a clear hint to one of Caroli's ideals.

[201] *Ibid.*: "Male enim res ipsa com⟨m⟩unis se habet, cum ipse princeps proprio sibi sensu/i/habundat."

[202] *Ibid.*: "Nec afferre nunc libet exempla, quis habunde confirmare possemus, quanta sit vel in *conveniendo* dignitas vel in *com⟨m⟩uniter conferendo* utilitas." Emphasis mine; again, expressions of community.

[203] *Ibid.*: "Ea profecto tanta est, ut nulla ratione, si recte iudicare velimus, civitates aut populi, non familie, non domus absque preclaro ⟨⟨illo⟩⟩ instituto stare conservarive possint; videmusque clarissime tam diu imperia et respublicas floruisse, quam diu hec publica in orbe viguit disciplina. At ubi unius arbitrio agi ceptum est, tum primum labi res, deinde magnopere fluctuare, / ad / ultimum ad solum deduct⟨⟨as⟩⟩ accepimus." The last sentence echoes Livy, *Praefatio* 9: "… labente deinde paulatim disciplina velut desidentes primo mores sequatur animo, deinde ut magis magisque lapsi sint, tum ire coeperint praecipites…"

[204] *Ibid.*: "Ipsa proinde natura nos docet nequaquam sibi ipsi homines esse natos, sed patrie sed amicis sed religioni, que toto studio conservare atque augere debemus, hisque contraria, quasi nature repugnantia, spernere ac detestari."

and *caritas* more than trusting only in themselves or placing the opinions of others below their own and neglecting them. And nothing attracts men to each other and draws them mutually together more than assemblies and meetings of citizens.[205]

These *civium concilia* and *conventiones*, which enable the opinions of many different citizens to be heard, help to unify the city and to enforce *benivolentia* and *caritas*. These terms obviously refer not only to religious or ethical virtues but also—in this context—to political ones. In this work Caroli compares the conduct of religious and political institutions. Not only his personal controversy with Auribelli but also Florentine politics under the leadership of Cosimo de' Medici in his last years are in the background of this speech. The historical figure of St Antonino was involved in many social and political issues of his day, and this is reflected in his fictional persona in the dialogue.[206] Antonino's criticism of religious and political practices hints at the similarity between the two tyrants: Auribelli and Cosimo,[207] while connecting Antonino, and by implication Caroli himself, with the tradition of Florentine republicanism. Carrying on his account of political institutions and practices, Antonino suggests, by referring to the ancients, that the right citizens should be chosen as magistrates of these assemblies and that not everyone should participate in every decision.[208] Antonino refers

[205] *Ibid.*, pp. 227–228: "Unde nil aliud est quod ⟨⟨ita⟩⟩ animos hominum benivolentia et caritate solvat, quam sibi nimium credere, aliorum vero sententias posthabere atque negligere, ni/c/hilque est quod homines magis alliciat ac maiorem in modum invicem nectat, ut civium ipsa concilia atque conventiones efficiunt."

[206] Antoninus' theological and intellectual importance in Florence during the 1450s is still a task for further studies. On Antoninus see especially D. Peterson, *Archbishop Antoninus: Florence and the Church in the Earlier Fifteenth Century* (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University 1985); Peter Francis Howard, *Beyond the Written Word—Preaching and Theology in the Florence of Archbishop Antoninus 1427–1459* (Firenze 1995); and M.W.F. Stone, 'The Origins of Probabilism in Late Scholastic Moral Thought: A Prolegomenon to Further Study', in *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales* LXVII, 1 (2000), pp. 114–157, especially pp. 143–148.

[207] Cosimo was portrayed as a tyrant in many Florentine chronicles. I shall discuss this issue in chapter two below.

[208] Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli—dal '*Liber dierum*'…' p. 228: "Ceterum, quoniam infinite pene incomoditates ac pericula sequerentur si semper esset in consilium populus advocandus, eapropter placuit antiquis, maximis certe viris, quosdam vel in annos vel menses esse legendos, qui constituendarum atque componendarum rerum capita ab omnibus haberentur." The emphasis on citizens consulting together is muted here. On some issues executive magistrates are needed; but following the ancient Roman practice, they should be elected for limited periods.

to the present Christian age and introduces an interesting analogy between the pagan *respublica* in antiquity and *religio* in the present:

> Indeed, although our manner is not the same, but instead the guiding principle is very different, still we are not so separated from the name of a republic that there is no guiding principle to which we must submit for the preservation and the increase of our religion. Certainly there are other magistracies in our religious orders and a senate which is much more sacred and a more honourable body of senators, by means of whose judgment and discretion (if only they wished to be good men) our affairs should be governed and should be ordered piously and salubriously.[209]

Having deliberately used the terminology of the Roman republic to emphasize the resemblances between his order and secular republics, Antonino now points out the differences in outlook between pagan and Christian institutions, while still insisting on the structural similarities which justify the cautious use of Roman examples. Thus, there is still some institutional relation between the ancient pagan *respublica* and the Christian institution, and this would still justify the use of the Roman precedent.

We might have expected that Caroli, as a professional theologian, would think of the primitive Church as the most natural Christian model for resolving the present crisis, at least in relation to his own order. After all, only a few decades later Savonarola would do exactly this. But, in fact, as we have seen, Caroli makes Antonino use only ancient Roman political terms and examples. Caroli's classical education seems to have influenced his thinking, even when he was discussing a religious crisis as a Christian theologian. We may take this as an example of humanist theology, not in the context of humanists who became involved in theology (such as Ficino and Pico, to be discussed in the following chapters), but rather in that of a professional

[209] *Ibid.*: "Nobis vero licet non idem modus, at longe dissimilis inveniendi ratio sit, non tamen ita a reipublice nomine seiuncti sumus, ut nulla sit nobis pro nostre religionis conservatione et augmento providentie ratio subeunda. Sunt certe in religionibus nostris alii magistratus et sanctior longe senatus et preclarior conscriptorum patrum numerus, quorum arbitrio et voluntate (si boni viri esse voluerint) res nostre gubernentur ac pie et salubriter componantur." Note that even in a passage which points out the differences between Roman and Christian institutions, Caroli, speaking through Antoninus, retains the Roman terminology for the magistrates (*magistratus*, *senatus*, *patres conscripti*) in order to emphasize their structural similarity. Compare with Paolo Cortesi's use of *senatus* for the Church in his *Liber sententiarum* (1504) discussed in John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism*… p. 155; and see more examples on pp. 157–158.

theologian whose thought was to some extent shaped by his humanist education. There is a tension in him between his admiration for previous generations of Dominicans, who lived entirely within the mediaeval tradition, and his constant appeal, not to scholasticism or to Scripture, but to the ancient Roman republic. It is clear that his notion of history is influenced by classical sources, in which humanists found ethical models for the present. His interest in the history of his order and his monastery, and in ancient Roman history, rather than in the history of the primitive and the mediaeval Church, reflects both his own personal and institutional crisis and the growing influence of humanism. Caroli's comments on the primitive Church—especially of the early Christian martyrs—were set out in the traditional debate with Paulus and Franciscus in Book I. As we shall see, this is a complex matter, since a humanistically inclined thinker such as Ficino still uses early Christian history in his philosophical and theological discussions.

Returning to Antonino's speech we should note that the word *religiones* stands for the institutions and practices by which the religious orders were governed. It is not enough to have assemblies and magistrates. These assemblies, magistrates and 'senators' must also have *bonitas* (a pagan concept) and *sanctitas* (a Christian notion) in order for them to be able to carry out the wishes of the fathers and to regulate individual matters piously and justly. Antonino also emphasizes the importance of diligence in these leaders.[210] He concludes his discussion of the first element required for rebuilding religious and political structures, *caritas*:

> Therefore, we who are called citizens of sacred matters and members of the family of God, if we live well and if we love each other with mutual *caritas*, if we care not so much for our own but rather for the common welfare, and if, finally, it is not in vain that we choose to be religious, what else do we lay out by these efforts, but new cities without [the need for] material defenses?[211]

[210] *Ibid.*: "Quo circa non per se hominum cetus atque frequentia laudabilis esse vel iudicari potest, nisi et convenientium bonitas et cause sanctitas congregationem probet. Neque vero sibi ipsis, sed deo, sed religioni convenire debent, ut divinis sacrificiis presint, ut testamenta patrum conservent utque singula iuste ac pie moderentur. Nec minor illis diligentia esse debet, quam in apibus ipsi diuturna visione miremur." Again, Christian and pagan concepts and images appear side by side.

[211] *Ibid.*: "Itaque his studiis nos, qui cives sanctorum et domestici dei [Eph 2, 19] vocamur, quid aliud, si bene vixerimus sique mutua nos caritate amaverimus, si non tam propriam quam com⟨m⟩unem salutem curaverimus sique tandem non frustra

So, Antonino ends this section on an optimistic note with the promise of a better future, in which the brilliance of the sun—the symbol of *caritas*—and the pure love of religion can be restored and increased.[212]

Moving on to the second element, the living stones, Antonino, following the Bible, compares living stones to three things: very courageous and excellent men; individual matters honestly and religiously constituted; a deep acquaintance with literary studies.[213] He then provides some examples of living stones: St Dominic—the founder of the Dominican Order, the invincible Peter the martyr, and two Doctors and preachers of the Church: Thomas Aquinas and Vincentius Valentinus.[214] They are models of the first sense of living stones. The account at the beginning of this book of the smashing of living stones now becomes a symbol for the destruction of the foundations of the religious orders, especially of the Dominican Order. Antonino nevertheless emphasizes that these foundations are eternal. If the living stones are models for the best doctrine and Christian life, then the opposite, dead stones, that is, those infected with malice and petulance, are the worst models.[215]

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religiosi esse voluerimus, nisi novas ⟨⟨quasdam⟩⟩ sine carnalibus munimentis civitates locamus?"

[212] *Ibid.*, p. 229: "Ea vero que hac nostre orationis parte deduximus, si probe memorie teneantur, solis claritatem castumque religionis amorem in familias nostras reducere ac magnopere augere posse non dubito."

[213] *Ibid.*: "Tria sunt, o mihi karissimi, que sacre littere vivis lapidibus [I Pet 2, 1–10] comparare solent: primum, fortissimos et prestantis⟨simos⟩ viros; deinde, singula probe ac sancte constituta; postremo, litterarum multa notitia hominis vivacitatem quamdam designare videtur." In this passage of the Epistle, only the first meaning is hinted at verse 5.

[214] *Ibid.*: "Igitur vivi ut lapides in nostre religionis fundamento beatissimus pater noster Dominicus et invictissimus martyr Petrus ac Thomas Aquinas et Vincentius Valentinus, doctores certe ac predicatores clarissimi fuere, qui / prima / in integritate et sanctimonia vite prima domus fundamenta iacientes, in mentibus hominum quamdiu machina ista durabit, nequaquam profecto morientur." St Dominic (c. 1170–1221) is the founder of the Dominican Order; St Peter of Verona or Peter martyr (1206–1252) was a celebrated Dominican preacher who struggled against the Cathars in central and Northern Italy and was murdered by them; St Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) is the *Doctor Angelicus*; St Vincetius Ferrarii of Valencia (1350–1419) was a famous Dominican preacher in Spain and Italy who became saint in 1455. See Kaeppeli, *Scriptores…* vol. IV, pp. 458–474.

[215] *Ibid.*: "Quisquis itaque / tibi / exemplo, quisquis doctrina⟨e⟩, quisquis institutioni fuerit tibi in vita; hic vivus lapis super quem ipse hedificaveris, hic tue tamquam architector vite privatus et com⟨m⟩unis hedificator utique / puti / noncupari potest. Quisquis vero tibi malitie, quisquis petulantie, quisquis iniquitati / s / erit, huius profecto si ad similitudinem vitam instituas, non vivo certe lapidi sed mortuo adhesisti, unde non firmitatem at ruinam quasi cotidie impendentem expectes."

Turning to the second sense of living stones, the Dominicans, who base their activities on two main virtues: obedience and humility,[216] should become models to be venerated and feared by everyone.[217] Antonino then mentions two more monastic virtues and connects them, once again, to political virtues, drawing yet another analogy with ancient Rome:

> We should add to these [virtues] the splendour of most sacred chastity and of voluntary poverty, so that an increase in private property would not put obstacles in the way of the common good. Nothing else so disturbs and almost uproots republics than [when] private interest is set above common discipline. Roman virtue ruled over the world when love of the native land blazed [in their hearts] more than private interest. But when they chose to look after themselves and to love themselves and their own advantages and profits, then, as we learned from Sallust, they soon fell into ruin, finally being led to slaughter and violence against the citizenry. Therefore, the authority of public matters should have greater value for us than private benefits, if we believe that our salvation and eternal life and everlasting prosperity should be treasured before other things.[218]

This is a further example of the use of religious virtues in a political context. Such religious and political virtues stand for the second meaning of the living stones, according to Antonino's interpretation. Giving preference to private matters in public life and politics is another symptom of an ongoing crisis. Monastic life is presented here as modeled to some extent on political life, and the whole analysis is strengthened by the testimony of Sallust. It is significant that Sallust is mentioned, but no explicit mention is made of such virtues being part of the Dominican heritage.

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[216] *Ibid.*: "Deinde ad trinam voti nostri professionem tamquam ad vivos lapides versi, sit vobis obedientia promtior et gradus humilitatis sublimior, quoniam his virtutibus e religione sublatis ni/c/hil digne effici cogitarive potest."

[217] *Ibid.*, p. 230: "Et idcirco omnis actio nostra tante debet dignitatis atque sanctitatis existere, ut in omnes retineamus au/c/toritatem quamdam, qua et nos venerentur et metuant."

[218] *Ibid.*: "Addamus istis oportet et sanctissime castimonie et voluntarie paupertatis decus, ne familiaris amplificatio rei com⟨m⟩unis boni detrimenta ministret. Neque enim aliud est, quod ita res publicas/per/turbet ac propemodum evertat ut privata gratia com⟨m⟩uni anteposita discipline. Prefuit orbi virtus romana, cum plus patrie quam privatus amor exarsit. At ubi se ipsos ac proprias utilitates et com⟨m⟩oda prospicere et amare ceperunt,/l/mox labi fluere ac demum in civium caedes et rapinas ferri, Salustio teste [Sallust, *Cat.* 5, 9; Augustine, *De Civ.* II, 18], didicimus. Quam ob rem plus apud nos publice rei autoritas quam privata emolumenta valere debent, si salutem nostram eternamque vitam ac sempiternas opes pre ceteris ducimus esse diligendas."

After discussing *bonitas morum* and *vite sanctimonia* Antonino moves to the third meaning of living stones by discussing the importance of literary and biblical studies. He says that all our delight should lie in the love and learning of literature, especially sacred, and that such studies are necessary for the religious.[219] He praises these studies as the greatest of all virtues and as the best instrument for improving human nature and behaviour.[220] Yet, when we come to our own day, he says, it seems that we retain almost no intellectual capacities and are, as it were, wiped clean.[221]

Concluding his discussion of the living stones, Antonino seems much more optimistic than Dominici. He bases his hope for rebuilding the house and the temple solely on the remembrance and imitation of these living stones.[222] So, the writing of history becomes for Antonino, and thus for Caroli, the only means of dealing with the political and spiritual crisis, since it allows us to contrast the present with the past and to learn from the past. But the past is not just the past of the Dominican Order. Roman history, a component of the new humanist educational programme, figures prominently as a model from the past.

Finally, Antonino reaches the third stage of his plan for the rebuilding of the house and temple: *superhedificandum*. We must at least ensure that the *lux* and *gloria* of the past are by no means turned into darkness by shameless actions.[223] At this stage, too, we find a mixture of religious

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[219] *Ibid.*: "Quid dicam de litterarum precipuo ac ferventi amore, que tertia pars non minori patribus nostris cure quam bonitas morum et vite sanctimonia fuit? In his certe studiis et si omnis delectatio nostra debeat posita esse, / i / ad sacrarum tamen litterarum studia precipuo quodam et singulari desiderio referri religiosos decet." Note that the studies of *litterae* in general are mentioned first and that *sacrae litterae* are presented as the most important of these.

[220] *Ibid.*: "Tante quidem ⟨⟨notitia ista⟩⟩ virtutis esse cognoscitur, ut sola veri dei cognitione caeteras antecellat. Sed et ipsa hominum diriguntur actus, moderantur ingenia, mores exornantur, homoque interior illustratur et omni genere virtutis impletur."

[221] *Ibid.*: "Caeterum ad id hodie venimus, ut pene ingenia nulla teneamus et quasi oblitterati sumus." Note the word play on *oblitterati*: we have lost our knowledge of letters, and therefore, we barely exist.

[222] *Ibid.*, pp. 230–231: "His ergo lapidibus ad memoriam revocatis, poterit certe hec domus in pristinam reformari dignitatem, quam contrariis studiis pene dirutam atque prostratam videtis. Erramus enim si aliis artibus, aliis exercitationibus aliisque studiis / existimamus / has amplissimas edes, haec dignissima ⟨⟨templa⟩⟩, haec magnifica hedificia credimus fuisse constituta."

[223] *Ibid.*, p. 231: "Omnes ⟨⟨itaque⟩⟩ homines, qui sese optimis atque clarissimis parentibus ortos haberi volunt, toto animi corporisque conatu ita se gerant oportet, ut acceptam a maioribus lucem et gloriam nequaquam improbis actionibus in tenebras convertant. Quin eo magis ita illis vivendum est, ut si superiorum egregia facta super-

and political virtues: *caritas* and *humilitas* (religious virtues), together with *mutuus amor* and *benivolentia* (social and political virtues), are presented as opposed to *honorum glorieque cupiditas* (a social and political vice often mentioned in pagan literature). When private interests become more important than public matters, the injury occurs not only on the political but also on the spiritual level.[224]

Antonino then explains what he regards as the cause of the present situation: internal dissension within the body of the religious order, which acts like a sickness of this body.[225] It is important to notice the implication for Caroli's reform in Antonino's words: *Nos autem, pace omnium dixerim, ex uno ordine plurimos pro uniuscuiusque voluntate effecimus, nec tanta in plerisque egritudinum moderatio fuit, ut eas animo continerent, nisi etiam habitu et nomine extra prodirent.* The lack of moderation in most sicknesses, that is, in most disagreements, was the reason why members of the religious orders could not contain them within the soul, unless they also appeared outwardly in name and character. It was during one such disagreement, as we know, that Caroli was exiled from his monastery.

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are non possint, saltem propius illis accedendum putent." The first sentence echoes Sallust, *Catiline* 1, 1: "Omnis homines, qui sese student praestare ceteris animalibus, summa ope niti decet…"

[224] *Ibid.*: "Principio igitur omnium rerum Caritas ipsa atque humilitas inremisso studio superhedificanda proponatur, ut altera mutuus amor ac benivolentia floreat, altera vero honorum glorieque cupiditas propellatur, quis optimis viris summa solet esse contentio. Quippe cum alter alteri prestare contendit, nec benivolentie caritas nec mansuetudo nec pietas conservari possunt. Erumpunt quidem haec ipsa desideria, nec patiuntur animos nostros vera via ad amplissima celi munera pervenire." On *honorum glorieque cupiditas* see expressions like *imperii cupido* (Sallust, *Catiline*, 10, 3); "nam gloriam honorem imperium bonus et ignavos aeque sibi exoptant" (Sallust, *ibid.*, 11, 2); "postquam divitiae honori esse coepere et eas gloria imperium potentia sequebatur" (Sallust, *ibid.*, 12, 1). *Gloriae cupido / cupiditas* is a common expression in classical Latin; see e.g., Cicero, *De finibus* I, 59.

[225] *Ibid.*: "Qua in re quam sepissime cogitanti mihi, nil / ut / plane ita detestandum videri solet, quam quod uni eidemque ordini, sub eisdem parentibus et legibus instituto, tante nichil⟨o⟩minus disparitates generaque vivendi inesse videantur. Et hii quidem servantes, hii vero ac transgressores habeantur; hii ut heredes exultent, hii vero absque hereditate miserabiliter consenescant. Ergo impie scinditur corpus, quod beatissimi patres nostri semper unum esse voluissent. Nam et institutionum nostrarum principio, cor omnibus unum et animam exponentes, id iustissimum censuere, ut qui sub una regula et professione vixissent, uniformes in observantiis esse omnino curarent [Thomas [ed.], *Constitutiones antiquae*… p. 15; Creytens, '*Les Constitutions*…' p. 29]. Nos autem, pace omnium dixerim, ex uno ordine plurimos pro uniuscuiusque voluntate effecimus, nec tanta in plerisque egritudinum moderatio fuit, ut eas animo continerent, nisi etiam habitu et nomine extra prodirent."

Antonino then associates this dissension with the violation of all things human and divine:

> It is thus no wonder if we are then full of disputes, contentions, and other discords, when some believe that they are better, and others believe that they are by no means inferior. Hence, therefore, idiosyncrasies, hence desertions, hence rivalries, hence deadly enmities are conceived and come forth, hence, finally, all things divine and human are violated. And often such competition for honour and reputation arises among these men that they do not restrain themselves from tearing each other to pieces, but rather burst out in the foulest expressions and harshest intentions. And so neither patience nor equality nor justice nor the dignity of other virtues can increase or sufficiently stand their ground, since the saying of our Saviour proves that divided kingdoms do not bring forth increase but rather ruin.[226]

Discord thus brings ruin on both religious orders and kingdoms. Antonino maintains that, given the dissension in religious orders, it is better to live alone, in a holy and just manner, than to be part of a religious community held together by a false unity based on ignorance.[227]

He next discusses the current state of *studia litterarum*, which should be at the centre of the Dominican Order, and are the reason why its members are called by the name of *praedicatores*, since it is not possible to preach truly without knowing many things.[228] But, he says:

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[226] *Ibid.*, pp. 231–232: "Unde nec mirum si deinde litibus, si iurgiis, sique ceteris discordiis pleni sumus, cum hii se meliores, hii vero nequaquam inferiores credant. Hinc proinde singularitates, hinc transfugia, hinc simultates, hinc capitalia odia concipiuntur ac prodeunt, hinc postremo omnia cum divina tum humana violantur. Fitque plerumque hos inter homines tanta honoris ac fame concertatio, ut nec a mutua dilaceratione se temperent, sed erumpant in fedissimas notas et acerbissimas voluntates. Itaque nec patientia nec aequitas nec iustitia nec aliarum virtutum dignitas augeri nec satis constare possunt, cum et regna divisa non incrementum parere sed ruinam, salvatoris nostri sententia probet." Based on Mt 12, 25 and Mc 3, 25, with additions.

[227] *Ibid.*, p. 232: "Quam ob rem satius atque melius foret eisdem preceptis, paribus cerimoniis similibusque vivendi modis sancte ac iuste singuli viveremus, ne uno in corpore tanta morum studiorumque diversitas animadverti posset. Neque vero hec unitas, ubi rerum ignoratione teneretur, laudabilis esset." On *rerum ignoratio* see n. 20 above.

[228] *Ibid.*: "Cumque nobilitate carnis ac vite sanctimonia nostras res operire minime valeamus, eo magis hec litterarum ⟨⟨studia⟩⟩ complectamur ⟨⟨oportet⟩⟩, quo maxime qualicumque operimento egemus. Faciet ad eam rem maiorum diligentia plurimum, si uti parentibus filii ad virtutes et studia provocantur, ita et nostri rationibus et exemplis ac prope modum stimulis honoris et glorie ad hec ipsa studiosissime impellantur. Maxime autem virtusque conducet et istarum dignitatum vestrarum cohibitio atque frenatio, et id quo vocamur predicatorum nomine, quod vere sine multarum rerum

> What is more foolish than to be plentifully supplied with this name when your studies are almost non-existent? Besides, effort should be invested in speaking, especially at the present time when these *studia humanitatis* have great influence on men. We do not think, like so many others, that it should be done in the manner of actors with trifling gesticulation, but rather with modesty, with gravity, and especially with an excellence of life. Indeed it is more honourable and more dignified to persuade men by the sanctity of one's life and ornament of one's moral character than with the haughtiness of words.[229]

Aware of the increasing influence of *studia humanitatis*, Antonino wishes to combine the humanist achievment in rhetoric with the lost mediaeval ethos of learning as deeply related to life and to the practising of virtues in reality. Much of humanist rhetoric is for him mere play acting which bears no relation to the sanctity and dignity of the religious life. He now presents a sharp contrast between the order's noble past and its lamentable present state.[230] But unlike Dominici, Antonino, who has suggested some ways of improving the situation, believes in the power of those who want to rebuild the house.[231] He encourages them and identifies the house with the republic:

> Therefore, most kind men, do not neglect the government of your republic, since your ancestors founded this most dignified and honourable house, preeminent among all others, with much toil.[232]

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cognitione fieri nequaquam potest." The official name of the Dominican Order is of course *Ordo Praedicatorum*.

[229] *Ibid.*: "Quid autem stultius quam tum maxime hoc nomine habundare, cum pene nulla sunt studia vestra? Danda preterea opera est in dicendo, temporeque isto presertim, in quo haec humanitatis studia plurimum apud homines possunt. Quod non ut plerique levi gesticulatione hystrionum more / conficiendum / conficiendum putamus, sed modestia, sed gravitate, sed vite prestantia maxime. Preclarius quidem ac dignius est sanctitate vite et morum ornatu, quam verborum fastu homines permovere."

[230] *Ibid.*: "O felicem ac memoria dignam priscorum patrum aetatem. O prestantissimum predicatorum ordinem. Tu primis illis diebus scientia et virtutibus homines illustrasti. Tu ecclesie sancte ruinas tuis humeris et diligentia reparasti. Tu audicissimorum hominum perfidiam tua patientia et longanimitate vicisti. Tu quoque faciles animos adhortatione predulci ad celestia desideria revocasti. At nunc, proh o dolor, in ea tempora ventum est, ut vix in plerisque boni ymaginem teneatis. Et licet cotidie ordinetis, semper tamen eadem inordinatio manet."

[231] *Ibid.*: "Haec sunt, carissimi filii, ex multis pauca remedia, que mihi videntur acuratissime observanda, si rem istam reparare disponitis."

[232] *Ibid.*, p. 233: "Igitur nolite, o viri humanissimi, gubernationem reipublice vestre negligere, quoniam hanc domum dignissimam ac pre ceteris honoratam progenitores vestri ingenti sudore adeo magnificam condiderunt."

The house and temple, which have previously stood for the Dominican Order and for religion in general, are described in terms of the political order. We might expect that Antonino, after praising the mediaeval ethos of learning, would also praise the mediaeval notion of monarchy. He prefers, however, to model the house on the late Roman republic, hinting at differences, but also excluding tyranny. This may come naturally to a Florentine, especially with the figure of Cosimo looming at the background; but it is not natural for such ideas to be expressed immediately after some words of praise for the mediaeval order of things.

At the end of his speech, Antonino explains to men of the present that their ancestors lived with the consciousness (*conscientia*) that a word contains sanctity together with literary skill. When this consciousness (*conscientia*) had already become a burden, others cultivated knowledge (*scientia*) above all other things.[233] Let us recall in this context the words of Armando Verde:

> La 'paura' del 'novo', percepito come distruzione del 'sicuramente dato', impedì al Caroli, e agli altri teologi, di distinguere quando l'analisi critica si portava sulle formulazioni dogmatiche e quando aggrediva lo stesso dato di fede, e di percepire che sin d'allora le scienze umane erano in grado di compiere fruttuose indagini sulle formulazioni dogmatiche senza distruggerne il contenuto.[234]

As a professional theologian, Caroli would have been aware of Lorenzo Valla's humanist critique of contemporary scholastic theology. This is implied in the analysis of Verde and further analyzed in Salvatore Camporeale's works.[235] Dogmatic formulations had been subjected to a new philological and historical critique, without "damaging" the "object of faith" (*dato di fede*). This provoked a reconsideration of the relationship between theology and philosophy, faith and opinion, and demanded a theological answer. I shall deal with these themes—which are the main themes in this study—in the next chapters; but I would like to reiterate here that Caroli should be regarded as one of the precursors of those who discussed such themes in the context of the religious and political crisis in Florence in the second half of the *Quattrocento*. Aware of the

[233] *Ibid.*: "Videte ne iam demum ad entia vestra nomina terminetis. Quod ita intelligi volo. Primi ac venerabiles patres vestri conscientia certe vixerunt, quod nomen sanctimoniam continet cum peritia litterarum. Reliqui vero cum iam fortasse conscientie pertesum esset, scientiam posthabitis aliis coluere."

[234] Verde, *Lo studio*… p. 1361.

[235] Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla*… (Firenze 1972); and his *Lorenzo Valla*… (Roma 2002).

potential danger, Caroli tried to show that literary skill should not be used against the sanctity of the Scriptures, but rather that they should be combined, as they had been among the ancestors and fathers of the Dominican Order.

Antonino goes on to contrast the attitude of these past Dominicans with that of the men of the present age. You think, he says to his contemporaries, that it is sufficient to follow the way of life of animals, and merely to live.[236] But when we are dealing with the Scriptures, it is the salvation of our souls that is at stake. He encourages them to lift up their souls from the depths, since the divine goodness has been waiting for them for a long time.[237] He concludes his speech with these words:

> Now, finally, have pity on your fallen house, and do not wish to be the sort of people in whose day this house, once glorious, would perish. Hasten to meet all your troubles and dangers, and let everyone exhort and rule himself; nor should you burden the hand of an outsider, but instead you yourselves should correct things done improperly by your own hand. Nor should your courage flag. Indeed you will have divine inspiration which though inchoate, you will be able to proceed with and to complete properly, if you desire with every exertion and effort to be men.[238]

Caroli, through Antonino, expresses the feeling of living in a time of crisis. His frequent comparisons and contrasts between past and present reinforce this feeling. It was born out of a deep historical consciousness in which we can see the clear influence of humanistic methods and sensibilities on the professional theologian. The crisis, which has both a religious and a political aspect, reflecting a breakdown of both religious and political virtue, is portrayed in the dream vision of the destruction of the house, which stands for the monastery and the Dominican Order, as well as for the republican institutions of Florence.

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[236] Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli—dal '*Liber dierum*'…' p. 233: "Nunc autem, pace vestra dixerim, entia dumtaxat effici pecorum more, modo vitam agamus, satis esse putatis."

[237] *Ibid.*: "Erigite/amus/ergo tandem vos ipsos, nec tamdiu in infimo iacere patiamini animos vestros, quos divina bonitas iam diutius expectavit."

[238] *Ibid.*: "Misereamini ⟨⟨iam demum⟩⟩ domus vestre labentis, nec hii/se/esse velitis quorum diebus haec, olim gloriosa, depereat. Occurratis/mus/omnibus malis et periculis vestris, sitque sibi quilibet adhortator et princeps, nec alienam operiamini manum, sed vos ipsi minus bene gesta manu propria corrigatis/mus/. Nec deficiatis/mus/animo. Aderit enim vobis aspiratio certe divina, qua inchoata prosequi ac perficere recte poteritis/mus/, si omni studio omnique conatu esse volueritis/mus/viri."

The dream vision ends with Jacobus remarking that the description was admirable and almost (*fere*) similar to the present state of affairs. He praises the remedies suggested by Antonino and encourages himself and Johannes to hold them in their memory.[239] This is how the third day, and with it the whole dialogue, ends.

The image of the crisis becomes wider and more inclusive in the course of the dialogue. In Book I, it is the personal crisis of Johannes and Jacobus. In Book II, it becomes the crisis of the monastery, and, by implication, of the Dominican Order. In Book III, there are quotations and allusions to ancient Rome, and Roman republican models are offered as part of the solution to the monastic crisis. Both *patria* and *domus* should be saved.

As I have already noted, Antonino's speech represents the final accord in this dialogue, and because of the close relations between the historical St Antonino and Caroli, it may well express Caroli's own solution to the crisis. Another feature of Antonino's speech, which will become more important in the next two chapters, is the type of sources which he employs or alludes to. The only Church Father mentioned by Antonino as an authority to be followed is Augustine. The four mediaeval heroes he mentioned (St Dominic, Peter the martyr, Thomas Aquinas, and Vincentius Valentius) are only presented as examples of living stones. The *domus* and *patria* have to be rebuilt on the foundations of Scripture, the Dominican traditions, and the Roman republic. Even in Books I and II no Church Fathers other than Augustine and no Doctors of the Church are mentioned as authorities. Moreover, especially in Book I, Johannes often refers to examples from ancient pagan history; and very close to the beginning of the book he quotes a passage from Virgil's description of the destruction of Troy to express his own feelings about the destruction of his monastery. It is no accident that most of the classical quotations, allusions, and examples appear in Johannes' speech in Book I and in Antonino's speech in Book III.

Caroli's radical analysis of the spiritual and political crisis, in the dream vision and in the dialogue as a whole, is not a single, isolated, or eccentric case. It is part of an increasingly tense atmosphere which, as I shall try to show in the rest of this book, is essential for understanding the religious, intellectual, and political developments in Florence dur-

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[239] *Ibid.*: "Res quam hodie retulisti mirabilis fuit, et conditioni rerum nostrarum fere assimilis. Sed et remedia, que vir beatissimus retulit, optima et sanctissima sunt. Ea utinam memoria teneamus."

ing the final decades of the fifteenth century. The *ignoratio rerum* became the serious sickness of the people at present, especially the Dominicans. This represnts an important shift among professional theologians and in theological discourse in general during the last decades of the fifteenth century, in which the emphasis was more on practical issues like the state of the religious orders and the nature of monastic life, the spiritual decline and the kind of reform which is required, than on speculative issues. *Caritas, communitas, amicitia, unitas*, and *concordia* became essential for both a religious community and a political one. Thus, traditional mediaeval ideas about the common good, combined with the newly discovered classical ideals of the Roman republic, were at the background of the evolution of a new humanist theology.

The historical importance of Caroli lies in the fact that he turned the internal institutional authority crisis on the question of the reform in the Dominican Order into a much broader notion of a spiritual crisis, deeply related to the political and cultural tensions of his time. He first brought the internal Dominican crisis to the Florentine context; the ancient Roman republican model which he offered as a political model for his Order is related to Florentine republican traditions, but it also relates the spiritual crisis to politics: a more cooperative and a less centralized way of governing the Order (not according to the will of one man, not by a tyrant) might also be regarded as a different way of govening a city (the *civitas* and the *conventus*, in which citizens and friars live), certainly in a time when the Florentine government became more centralized and was directed, to some extent, according to the will of the Medici house and its supporters.[240] Here, as we have seen, we have the interesting relations and tensions in Caroli, between the Order and the city, through the terms *religio, domus, patria*, and *civitas*. On a more implicit level, we have noticed the extensive use of Virgilian images, especially in the descriptions of the crisis. Here, the tension between *studia divinitatis* and *studia humanitatis* reaches its high point; in some way, Virgil becomes relevant for confronting the spiritual crisis. As we have seen, the sense of loss and separation from the ancients is very strong in Caroli, since it embraces also the loss and separation from the

[240] Most relevant here is the concept of the workshop or *bottega* (replacing the historiographical notion of the individual hero as the "Big Man") for understanding the political dynamic in Florence under the Medici; see Melissa Meriam Bullard, *Lorenzo Il Magnifico*… chapter four. See also F.W. Kent, *Lorenzo de' Medici and the Art of Magnificence* (Baltimore 2004), especially the first two chapters. And see the discussion of the political context in the next chapter.

founders of the Dominican Order; thus, the ancients (and especially Virgil) become for Caroli identified (in regard to the sense of loss) with these great Dominicans of the past; they both represent a lost model of republican and Christian values, on both the political-civil and the religious-ethical levels.

Thus, Florentine republicanism (Caroli as a follower of Leonardo Bruni in writing a *laudatio* for Florence) and the humanist fashion in Florence (Caroli as a student of Cristoforo Landino at the *Studio*, to whom he dedicated the introductory letter to his *laudatio*),[241] become part of the internal institutional authority crisis on the question of the reform in the Dominican Order (Caroli as a follower of both Dominici and Antonino). This is how the internal crisis in the Dominican Order became a spiritual crisis, involving political and cultural dimensions. Caroli locates the internal Dominican crisis in Florence and extends it, so that from now on it includes both political and cultural concerns.

In the next chapters of this book I shall show how the internal Dominican crisis turned out to be a spiritual, political, and cultural crisis in Florence, a drive for the evolution of a humanist theology in the last decades of the fifteenth century. The next stages in this evolution will be discussed in the next two chapters, focusing on sermons of humanists and on Ficino. A more technical-theological aspect will be discussed in the chapter on Pico. Then I shall move on to discuss the Savonarola affair.

[241] See n. 18 above.

CHAPTER TWO

HUMANIST THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE

In the first chapter I have illustrated the spiritual tension by means of a discussion of the work of a professional theologian who sees some of the problems from the point of view of a churchman and offers solutions to the specific problems of his own religious order. Even here we have detected some of the elements of humanist theology which will appear more clearly in the following chapters. Caroli—especially when speaking in his own person as Johannes—hardly refers to any scholastic author, and only occasionally cites one of the great Church Fathers. He does refer quite often to scriptural passages, but even they are outweighed by references to ancient Greek and Roman examples and authors, and especially Virgil. Even his scheme for reforming the Dominican Order is based to some extent on Roman republican models. Thus even the theologian who deals with a limited aspect of the crisis which is close to his personal experience already shows the influence of his humanist education.

In this chapter I shall try to illustrate some aspects of humanist theology through a detailed analysis of sermons given by humanists in religious confraternities, together with other orations, all of which were delivered in Florence during the 1470s and 1490s. Here we have humanists and their pupils disseminating their own concepts of religion among ordinary people. This gives them the opportunity to produce a new kind of sermon, completely different from the typical scholastic sermon and often explicitly critical of its style and structure. In most of these sermons, although not in all of them, the Church Fathers and Doctors of the Church are hardly explicitly mentioned, and prominence is given to Scripture and to Greek and Roman authors and examples, including some authors recently discovered in the West. Much of the emphasis in these sermons is placed on the practice of religion, based on the love of God and the emotional yearning for the divine rather than on theological theory.

Before I discuss these sermons, let me place them in the historical context in which humanist theology developed.[1]

[1] This textual *corpus*, only a small part of what must have been a much larger

The Historical Context

During the last decades of the fifteenth century the Medici regime became stronger and more concentrated through the intensive use of the *Balie* (emergency assemblies) and the well-known practice of using the *Accoppiatori* (elected citizens who were responsible for the organiza-

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textual *corpus* that was lost, has not yet been sufficiently discussed by historians. It is related both to the study of the humanists and humanism and to the study of the religious confraternities. The sources discussed in this chapter are not new, but I shall try to show that they are part of a new humanist theology. In fact, the sources analysed here have been discussed in some detail, e.g., in Ronald F.E. Weissman, 'Sacred Eloquence—Humanist Preaching and Lay Piety in Renaissance Florence', in Verdon and Henderson [eds.], *Christianity and the Renaissance*… pp. 250–271. Weissman presents a sociological analysis of the phenomenon of humanists' preaching in the religious confraterninties. He justly criticizes two dichotomies which one encounters in the historiography: a dichotomy between exterior and interior spirituality, and that between learned and popular religiosity. But two other important contexts are not discussed by him: the theological and the political contexts. In this chapter I shall present a new dichotomy which emerges from these sermons: that between scholastic and humanist theology. This, I would argue, helps to explain the critical and "anti-institutional bias" which "is against ecclesiastical rather than lay religious institutions", as well as the fact that the humanists "rarely cited the clergy or the formal institutions of the Church as *exempla* to be imitated, as complements of right reason, as sources of illumination, or even as a necessary component of those eucharistic rites about which so many sermons were written" (*ibid.*, p. 265). These theological and political contexts have also not been discussed in Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Lay Religious Tradition …'; Eugenio Garin, 'Desideri di riforma nell'oratoria del quattrocento,' in *La cultura filosofica*… pp. 166–182; Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image*… vol. 2, pp. 638–650. Kristeller, for instance, opens his discussion with a statement in which he rejects former attitudes regarding "open or secret paganism" in the Renaissance, replacing it with "a growth of non-religious interests rather than… anti-religious tendencies" (p. 99). This is still very far from the Florentine humanism of the second half of the fifteenth century. But in this article Kristeller examines the relations between lay religious associations and Ficino's Platonic Academy through some detailed discussion of Ficino's 'religious' or 'spiritual' works; his purpose was to add the popular religious literature he found in the confraternities to the known influences on Ficino (p. 121). As I will try to show, the theological and the political contexts, as well as the notions of crisis and the evolution of a humanist theology, are essential for the understanding of the relations between humanism and religion at that time. Another relevant *corpus* on a more popular level of fifteenth-century vernacular culture can be found in the collections of religious laude, prayers, and hymns which were used in the religious confraternities as well as in many other venues. See the detailed discussion of Lauro Martines in his *Strong Words* … chapter three. This textual *corpus* should be compared with contemporary scholastic preachers and moralists such as Jean Gerson, Bernardino of Siena, and Antoninus, but this is beyond the scope of the present study. On Gerson see Macguire, *Jean Gerson*…; D. Catherine Brown, *Pastor and Laity in the Theology of Jean Gerson* (Cambridge 1987); Louis Mourin, *Jean Gerson prédicateur français* (Bruges 1952). On Bernardino see Paul Thureau-Dangin, *Un prédicateur populaire dans l'Italie de la Renaissance: Saint Bernardin de*

tion of the elections) to manipulate the electoral results by *imborsare a mano* (filling the voting bags by hand).[2] As already mentioned above (in n. 240 of the previous chapter), Melissa Bullard's discussion, in chapter four of her book on Lorenzo de' Medici, of the importance of the concept of the workshop or *bottega* for understanding Lorenzo's political activity (both in internal and in diplomatic affairs), and the Medici regime in Florence in general and the way it functioned, is essential here. Without this concept, which represents a network of trained collaborators working together in all areas of *vita activa*, by which Lorenzo's policy was shaped, we are left with the old historiographical notion of an individual hero, through which it is impossible to understand how all these complicated activities can be related to one single individual. Another important practice for reconstructing political authority is the Medici patronage of some Florentine confraternities, which included also new rituals that were related to the Medici family.[3] For these and other reasons, the regime of Lorenzo's father, Piero the Gouty, between 1464 and 1469, was described in some contemporary chronicles as an enemy of the republic and the freedom of the people, as a tyranny which enslaved the citizenry.[4] These political tensions between

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Sienne, 1380–1444 (Paris 1926); L. McAodha, 'The Nature and Efficacy of Preaching According to St. Bernardine of Siena', in *Franciscan Studies* 27 (1967), pp. 221–247; Franco Mormando SJ, *The Preacher's Demons. Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago 1999). On Antoninus see Stefano Orlandi OP, *Antonino, Archivescovo di Firenze, Dottore della Chiesa: Studi*, 2 vols. (Firenze 1959); Howard, *Beyond the Written Word*…

[2] Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence*… pp. 25, 30–35, 80.

[3] Trexler, *Public Life*… pp. 320, 378–379; Lorenzo Polizzotto, *Children of the Promise—The Confraternity of the Purification and the Socialization of Youths in Florence, 1427–1785* (Oxford 2004), pp. 55–57, 61. For some more general accounts regarding the importance of the confraterities in the social, religious, political, educational, and cultural contexts in that period see Rab Hatfield, 'The Compagnia de' Magi', in *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970), pp. 107–161; Ronald F.E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood* …; Lorenzo Polizzotto, 'Confraternities, Conventicles, and Political Dissent: The Case of the Savonarolan 'Capi Rossi'', in *Memorie Domenicane* 16 (1985), pp. 235–283; John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford 1994); Konrad Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411–1785* (Toronto 1998); Nicholas Terpstra, *Abandoned Children of the Italian Renaissance: Orphan Care in Florence and Bologna* (Baltimore 2005).

[4] Alamanno Rinuccini, *Ricordi storici di Filippo di Cino Rinuccini dal 1282 al 1460, colla continuazione di Alamanno e Neri suoi figli fino al 1506*, ed. G. Aiazzi (Firenze 1840), pp. 96–97: "… e in questa petizione si cominciò a vedere la manifesta dissensione tra'principali della città, perchè Messer Luca Pitti ne fu autore e confortatore, e non piaceva così a Piero di Cosimo e suoi seguaci, benchè apertamente non la contradicessi se non Antonio di Puccio per parte del detto Piero de' Medici; ed il popolo molto si rallegrò

the Medici and their various republican opponents—such as Luca Pitti, Andrea de' Pazzi, and Girolamo Savonarola—dominated the internal politics in Florence until the end of the century. (Even though the Medici were expelled in 1494, their many supporters in the city kept these tensions). Both Cosimo and his grandson Lorenzo, used their cultural patronage and the fact that Florence became one of the cultural centers of Italy during these decades, in the field of politics, to overcome Florence's political weakness in comparison to Milan, Rome, and Naples. Lorenzo's double strategy as a private citizen (and at the same time as the true leader of Florence) was meant to pacify internal republican sentiments and tensions, and to ensure Florence's political and economic interests in the delicate balance between Florence's powerful allies (Lodovico Sforza of Milan, pope Innocent VIII, and Ferrante the king of Naples), by using his image as an influential leader and identifying himself with the city. But during the second half of the 1480s this delicate balance was much threatened.[5] In addition, political life

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di questo, cioè del serrare le borse; ma ne seguì quello che di sotto diremo"; p. 102: "… il perchè Piero di Cosimo ebbe occasione e subito fece pigliare l'arme agli amici suoi, e la notte fece guardare la piazza e così la casa sua, che fu segno di espressa tirannide, perchè poco avanti la signoria avea mandato bando che niuno si dovesse armare"; "E continuamente faceva venire fanti per sua parte, avendo coascuno altro poste giù l'armi; sicchè si vide chiaro lui esser manifesto tiranno nella città nostra; che così adviene dove si lascia fare uno troppo grande sopra gli altri, che è cosa perniziosissima nelle repubbliche, e sempre poi riesce a questo fine"; p. 103: "E più si vinse che le borse del priorato e gonfaloniere di giustizia stessino aperte per anni 10, cioè che in detto tempo si avessino a fare I priori e gonfaloniere di giustizia a mano per li accoppiatori che pe'tempi fussino; cose tutte violente e tiranniche e da tenere il popolo in perpetua servitù, e conculcare la libertà già quasi perduta"; pp. 103–104: "… sicchè di tutto si può intendere l'animo di Piero e suoi aderenti non esser suto contento a vivere come cittadino, ma avere sempre appitito di signoreggiare; il perchè admonisco e conforto, se mai alcuni queste cose leggeranno, che abbino avvertenza di non lasciare mai nella repubblica, che disideri vivere in libertà, crescere tanto alcuno cittadino che egli possa più che le leggi: perchè lo insaziabile appetito delli uomini, quando può più che non si coviene, più anche vuole e desidera che non è licito"; p. 104: "A dì 11 di Settembre 1466, pel consiglio della balìa furon confinati per anni 20 li infrascritti cittadini, e la cagione si disse che era, perchè eglino aveano voluto fare venire genti d'arme in su'terreni del comune di Firenze, e che aveano voluto fare contro la libertà; il che non era vero, anzi volevano rendere la libertà al popolo e trarlo dalla servitù in che era stato dal 1434 insino allora, ed ora vi è più che mai…"

[5] See Bullard, *Lorenzo Il Magnifico*… especially chapter two. For the delicate balance and the common notion of a coming crisis see, e.g., the remarks on p. 65: "A common theme of anxiety runs through the diplomatic correspondence of major Italian states in the period following the Barons' War. Political stability and mutual trust had given way during the war, their underpinnings corroded by suspicion prevalent even among the allies. The mutual distrust, which in retrospect appears exaggered, was symptomatic

throughout Italy in those years was strongly coloured by the threat, both political and spiritual, of the Turks and by continual efforts to unify the Italian states against this peril.[6]

Moving from politics to the spiritual life, as we have seen in the previous chapter, we can observe a long-standing tension in Christianity, which originated in the mid-fourteenth century and deeply affected both the formal and institutional levels of the Church, as well as religious life outside the Church, in Florence during the fifteenth century. Central figures in Florentine public life like Giovanni Dominici and Antonino Pierozzi had been powerful critics and reformers of the religious life of Florence during the first half of the *Quattrocento*. Caroli and Savonarola regarded themselves as their disciples and followers. Tensions inside the Church concerning the nature of the reform which was needed in the Mendicant Orders, on the one hand, and the growing influence of the religious confraternities and their complex relations with the Medici regime, on the other, were among the key issues in Florentine spiritual life.

I believe that this political and spiritual tension has a bearing on humanist theology. In humanist theology—a body of texts written during the last decades of the *Quattrocento* by Florentine humanists deeply involved in religious, theological, and spiritual issues (and with complex relations to the early humanists, to patristic and scholastic theology, and to ancient philosophy)—we find solutions offered both to the spiritual and to the political crisis. In relation to the spiritual crisis, we find in humanist theology a sharp and consistent separation between

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of the growing sense of impending disaster and internal collapse that provided the psychological tenor for the last decades of the fifteenth century."

[6] Rinuccini, *Ricordi storici*… pp. 109–110: "A dì 2 di Febbraio 1467 papa Paulo II avendo avuto prima lunga pratica e lunghi ragionamenti con le imbascerie delle potenze di Italia, le quali erano appresso di lui state già buono pezzo per cagione della guerra che allora vegghiava tra'Viniziani e la lega di sopra nominata, avendo prima molte volte udite tutte le ragioni di detti imbasciadori, la mattina del detto dì, intra il cantare della sua messa solenne pronunziò e pubblicò la detta pace con quelli capitoli che in essa si contengono; ma in somma conteneva questo effetto, che voleva fare lega e pace universale di tutte le potenzie di Italia; e questo per potere più espeditamente fare la 'mpresa contro il Turco"; p. 114: "A dì 24 di Dicembre [1470], circa ore 23 venne la novella in Firenze, come sabato a dì 22 di Dicembre a ore 21 si era conchiusa e ferma in Roma la lega universale tra le potenze principali d'Italia, cioè il santissimo padre papa Paulo, e la maestà del re Fernando, e la signoria di Vinegia, e il duca di Milano, e la comunità di Firenze, con quelli capitoli e modi e convenzioni che fu fatta la lega che si compilò a Vinegia fino dall'anno 1454 a dì 31 d'Agosto, come in questo si fa menzione."

what should be regarded as "human", and what should be regarded as "divine". This separation was needed in order to clarify for believers the foundations of religion, on the one hand, and of human opinions and interpretations, on the other. This does not imply a total separation between man and God. After all the aim of religion is to direct man towards God. The separation is between authorities such as Scripture, the Creed, and some of the more generally acknowledged early Fathers, and the opinions of later theologians and Doctors which do not represent a divine authority. The clarification of what is really based on divine authority, as against merely human theological speculations, can only help the believer in working his way towards the desired union with God.

In relation to the political crisis, on the other hand, these texts of humanist theology make no distinction between the religious and the political sphere. They apply religious terms and virtues to an overt political context, and political terms and virtues to a religious context. So, for example, Christ is represented not only as a religious figure but also as a political one. He is the sole source of just power and of just acts in political life. Binding political life to Christ was meant to achieve greater harmony between the various elements in Florentine society and to promote the participation of more citizens in politics through neutralization of the authority of the different factions, above all the Medici. The other aspect of this combination between religion and politics is the growing use of examples from ancient history, as well as ancient Roman political concepts like *res publica, senatus, rex, forum, populus, Romani ex quibus orti sumus*, in both political and religious contexts. This theme in Florentine history was discussed in n. 18 of the previous chapter.

It is important to emphasize that the phenomenon of the confraternities, even though it was a well-known mediaeval phenomenon, had reached a culmination and became a very important part in Florentine society during the fifteenth century, especially in the second half of the *Quattrocento*, for many social, political, and spiritual reasons. These confraternities, of both adults and youth, were founded also in order to give basic education in Christian faith and morals.[7] At this point the humanists played their role in this activity through their sermons. They were inducted for the dissemination and instruction of Christian

[7] See Eisenbichler, *The Boys*… p. 7.

dogmas and used their education and rhetoric. This is how a humanist theology was created with obvious humanist features, but also with more simple and popular religious features, which was very different from the dominant scholastic theology created by, and for, professional theologians. It was a theology which was created by lay intellectuals with deep religious feelings and serious intellectual interest in religion, for lay confraternities' members, and which was required, since it seems that some religious needs were not satisfied by the formal ceremonies of the Church. Such unsatisfied religious needs were, of course, symptoms of the spiritual crisis of the age. Thus, this humanist theology was a more simple and popular theology, almost without technical and logical discussions, and without demonstrations and arguments, coming from scholastic theology. It even included a critique of such discussions, as well as humanist rhetoric with its rich classical background, and some Neoplatonic influence. In this humanist theology a new balance was created between this classical background and Christian sources, and a greater place was given to the Scriptures, more than to the opinions of Church Fathers and Doctors. Scripture itself was now being employed from a new perspective. Biblical verses and stories were no longer cited as proof-texts to support a dogma or a religious ritual, but rather as historical examples and precedents, together with similar examples from pagan antiquity. Among post-biblical sources, some of the more important Fathers such as Jerome and Augustine still play an important role here, while the Doctors almost lost their status, and are cited from time to time only since they are part of the common culture and education.[8] Part of the new popular education was the emphasis placed by many of these humanists on the role of practical religion, based on faith and

[8] Compare with O'Malley's discussion regarding the characteristics of the new epideictic rhetoric in his *Praise and Blame*… pp. 51–76; see also the discussion in the introduction. But let me note here at least two essential differences between O'Malley's model and the humanist theology discussed here: 1. O'Malley claims that the epideictic sermon tended to be more historical and emphasized deeds as examples and models, while the scholastic thematic sermon tended to be more metaphysical (p. 62); as we shall see in Ficino's sermons as well as in some of Rinuccini's and Nesi's, there is a clear influence of Neoplatonic metaphysics. 2. O'Malley notes some traditional topics which one can find in the scholastic thematic sermon, such as discussions of miracles, which are not found in the epideictic sermon (p. 69); again, as we shall see, miracles do play an important role in Ficino's theology.

On the new perspective of scriptural evidence, see O'Malley's account in his *Praise and Blame*… p. 49: "In practice this means that the sermons at the court evince a tendency to look upon Scripture more as a history of God's actions and less as a manual of doctrinal proof-texts or a book of artfully disguised philosophical principles."

the love of God, as the proper way of establishing a relation with the transcendental divine sphere. But such a practice in the confraternities, based on humanist theology, existed mainly in the pre-Tridentine world. In the post-Tridentine world the Church strengthened its control of the confraternities, and especially on the teaching of Christian doctrine, and in fact such teaching was from now on an exclusive duty of the Church.[9]

The first two sections in this chapter present the new balance between humanism and Christian sources under the shadow of a spiritual and political crisis (the first section, analysing the *Declamationum liber*), together with Neoplatonic influence (the second section, analysing Ficino's sermons); the rest of the sections present analyses of sermons written by humanists which were meant to be delivered to the confraternities either by members of youth confraternities (the third section, analysing Poliziano's sermons) or delivered by themselves (the fourth section, analysing Rinuccini's sermons, the fifth section, analysing Nesi's sermons, and the sixth section, analysing sermons of other humanists).

I have organized each of these sections whenever possible according to outstanding themes and characteristics which are common to all its constituents. I have not attempted a thematic reorganization of all these sections together: as will be seen, each of them represents a different stage in the development and evolution of humanist theology.[10]

1. Declamationum liber

The first sermons I shall examine in the context of humanist theology are five rhetorical exercises by Ficino's students in the 1470s, which were put together along with some introductory material and realistic descriptions of the occasion under the title *Declamationum liber* by Benedetto Colucci da Pistoia (1438 – c. 1506).[11] What we have here is a first-hand glimpse of some of the problems which bothered the citi-

[9] Eisenbichler, *The Boys*… pp. 189–190.

[10] In some places, passages from these sermons are closely analysed, but some passages are only referred to, and those parts of the sermons which are not relevant to my theme are omitted. Even when I offer a close analysis, it is not my intention to provide a full commentary on these passages with all their aspects.

[11] *Scritti inediti di Benedetto Colucci da Pistoia*, ed. Arsenio Frugoni (Firenze 1939), pp. 1–47.

zens of Florence at the time: the Turks, the revolt of Volterra, Lorenzo's regime and so on. These sermons were delivered over three days,[12] most likely after December 21, 1473, during 25, 26, and 27.[13] The event took place at Ficino's house in Florence, where he held his school, in the presence of some close friends: Naldo Naldi, Alessandro Braccesi, Niccolò Michelozzi, and Angelo Poliziano. The five orators were: Paulo Antonio Soderini, Giovanni Cavalcanti, Bindacio Ricasoli, the younger Francesco Berlingheri, and Carlo Marsupini.[14] The general purpose of

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 46: "Postquam tribus diebus quinque praestantes iuvenes declamationes suas habuere…"

[13] On the 21 cardinal Niccolò Forteguerri bishop of Teano had died; he is mentioned just before the first sermon; *ibid.*, p. 3: "Sorte igitur Iohanni Cavalcanti prima oratio ad Pontificem Romanum contigerat, qui cum iam sublimiorem quendam locum ascenderet, ego et Marianus Pistoriensis, quibus semper Marsilii domus patuit, divino numine ad Michelotium tendebamus ut aliquid certi de casu Theanensis principis audiremus…" See the introduction, *ibid.*, pp. x, xiii.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 3: "Felicissimo namque die quo immortalis regum Regis natalitia celebrantur, cum Marsilio principe nostro in gymnasio suo convenerant Naldus ac Alexander Braccius, duo eloquentissimi viri, Nicolaus Michelotius et Angelus Politianus, felices contubernales tui; eos adire quinque praestantes ex nobilitate huius inclitae civitatis iuvenes: Paulus Antonius videlicet Soderinus, Iohannes Cavalcantes, Bindaccius Ricasolanus, Franciscus Berlingherius iunior et noster Carolus Marsupinus." James Hankins mentions this text in the context of evidences for the Platonic Academy of Florence ('The Myth of the Platonic Academy of Florence', in *Renaissance Quarterly* 44, 3–4 (1991), pp. 429–475; see pp. 445–447. This article was reprinted in Hankins' *Humanism and Platonism*… vol. 2, pp. 219–272), following Kristeller ('Lay Religious Traditions…' p. 110: "To this [sources regarding Ficino's Academy] we may add some letters and verses addresed to him, and the queer dialogue by his friend and pupil, Benedetto Colucci, entitled *Declamationes*.") and presenting a good account of the background of the author and participants, in which "Collucci, an old school friend of Ficino's, later a grammar teacher in Colle and Florence, was well acquainted with Ficino and in a good position to know the habits of his circle"; "… the poets Naldo Naldi, Alessandro Braccesi, and Poliziano, as well as Lorenzo de' Medici's secretary Niccolò Michelozzi. Of these men, Naldi and Poliziano are described in Ficino's letter to Prenninger as belonging to the first genus of his friends; Michelozzi as belonging to the second; Braccesi is not mentioned. Of the five noble Florentine youths, three—Bindaccio Ricasoli, Francesco Berlinghieri the Younger, and Carlo Marsuppini the Younger—are listed in the Prenninger letter as 'auditores'; a fourth, Paolo Antonio Soderini, is not mentioned but was the older brother of the 'academicus' and 'auditor' Piero Soderini; and the last, Giovanni Cavalcanti, was, as we have seen, at least informally a pupil of Ficino's" (pp. 445–446). Two of the orators, Giovanni Cavalcanti (Ficino's *unicus amicus* and originally the dedicatee of the commentary) and Carlo Marsupini, appear as the commentators in the first, second, third, and the fifth orations in Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Symposium*. On the issue of Ficino's Academy and the debate between James Hankins and Arthur Field, see Arthur Field, 'The Platonic Academy of Florence', in Michael J.B. Allen, Valery Rees, and Martin Davies [eds.], *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology*… pp. 359–376; on Colucci's text see pp. 364–366.

these five orations, as described at the beginning of the fifth one, was to encourage Italian leaders and councils in their war against the Turks, a war which obviously had both political and religious implications.[15]

In discussing these orations, I shall concentrate on the following points:

a. The Turkish danger as a possible *diluvium*, as a threat to the whole of Christianity, and the miserable state of the Christian Church at the time.[16]
b. The increasing use of ancient texts—some of them recently discovered—and of examples from ancient literature and history; the emphasis on Scripture and a few central Church Fathers; and the near disappearence of references to *Doctores*.
c. Declarations concerning the avoidance of rhetorical ornaments, however much they are made in the terminology of traditional rhetorical theory.

a. *The Turkish Danger and its Religious Connotations*

The first oration (pp. 4–14) was given by Giovanni Cavalcanti and addressed to pope Sixtus IV, supporting him in his struggle against the Turks. Cavalcanti refers already in his opening words to the war against the Turks and its consequences.[17] Throughout the oration and immediately after it, in Colucci's description, there are many expressions of despair about the coming war[18] which is represented as the

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 39: "Sed quoniam hoc genus dicendi nobis assumpsimus, ut senatus et principes Latinorum ad repellendum immane monstrum barbaricae gentis hortaremur, primum paucis incepta nostra prosecuti, id huic suadebimus populo, quod natura duce nullo orante saepissime fecisse constat. Nam quae civitas aut natio unquam fuit quae pro religione nostra tam gravia bella susceperit?" Notice the classical emphasis in the expression *senatus et principes Latinorum*. The expression *natura duce* is Ciceronian: *Fin.* V 69, (et al). This is important since Cicero's philosophical writings are a fairly new discovery. These sermons should be classified, according to classical theory of rhetoric, under *genus deliberativum*, which "was meant for a deliberative assembly like a senate, and the purpose was to persuade the assembly to take a definite course of action, such as going to war or not going to war" (O'Malley, *Praise and Blame*… p. 39).

[16] The Turkish threat was also a common topic in sacred sermons as shown in O'Malley, *Praise and Blame*… pp. 61, 115. Here, it is the political context of the *genus deliberativum*, but still, this topic, as I shall try to show, is inseparable from both political and religious aspects.

[17] *Scritti inediti*… p. 4: "Multa me ab hac prima declamatione dehortarentur"; "In hoc vero luctuosissimo et gravissimo bello quod infelicissime tot annos cum immanitate barbarica gerimus…"

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 14: "Postquam heros noster dicendi finem fecit, taciti indignabamur eo

most important event of the age.[19] These are connected with a strong sense of an impending crisis and a serious threat to Christianity. He refers to the traumatic memories of the fall of Constantinople[20] and the defeat of Paul II, before directly addressing the pope in terms which put the Turkish danger in the context of the present state of Christianity:[21]

> Sixtus, most honourable and Holy Father, you taught me when I was very young to suffer the most severe torments in the name of Christ; now, in control of so many great things, you must come to the assistance of the collapsing Church of the same Christ.[22]

Everybody is waiting for the pope's assistance.[23] This is going to be a long and hard war.[24] But then, Cavalcanti criticizes the avarice of former popes which has almost destroyed the Christian religion.[25] Thus,

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immanitatem barbarorum processisse, ut nobis difficilius esset eorum furori obstare quam illis cluentissima victoria nostra potiri. Omnes diuturno silentio usi sumus, tantus animos dolor ceperat; communis quoque moestitia effecit, ut quid venissemus percontari obliti potissimum videremur."

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 4: "Primum enim dicturus sum, Beatissime Pater, de gravitate huius belli maximi omnium quae fuerint aetate nostra gesta…"

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 8: "Quippe pro salute nostrorum fratrum et pro regni defensione illius Constantini, qui admirabili et inaudita pietate carissimam patriam et urbem omnium praestantissimam Christi pontificio dedicavit, anima etiam nostra fuerat effundenda; vitiatae sacratissimae virgines, immortalis dei templa incensa, sanctorum reliquiae prostratae, captivi adolescentes, pueri materna pectora implorantes, moestissimae viduae, vi barbarica avulsa connubia sic me deterrent, ut nihil magis verendum esse videatur, quam ne simillimum aut etiam luctuosius spectaculum nos fortissimi viri et omnium populorum nationumque victores aliis potissimum praebeamus." On this see e.g., Agostino Pertusi [ed.], *La caduta di Constatinopoli—Le testimonianze dei contemporanei*, 2 vols. (Milano 1976). And see also James Hankins' discussion of humanist crusading literature in 'Renaissance Crusaders. Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II', in *Humanism and Platonism*… vol. 1, pp. 293–424.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 9: "Post Pauli praedecessoris tui, Beatissime Pater, tremendum interitum quisque vir bonus studiosissime expectabat eum nobis praeberi pontificem qui oves sibi ab immortali Deo creditas ab immanissimo et immitissimo monstro piissime tutaretur."

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11: "… Sixte, pater optime ac sanctissime, docuisti me admodum adolescentem pro Christi nomine acerrima subire tormenta; nunc tu in tantarum rerum potestate eiusdem Christi Ecclesiae cadenti subvenias." The war against the Turks is put in the context of saving the Church; but notice that the Church itself is collapsing, not because of the Turkish threat. This is an obvious reference to an internal crisis.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 11: "In te, Pater Sanctissime, sperant omnes qui ab immitissimo barbaro capi et trucidari metuunt."

[24] There are many references to these difficulties, see e.g., *ibid.*, p. 5: "… ut in tanto excidio eminente"; "… hoc atrocissimum bellum"; *ibid.*, p. 7: "Sed gravius hoc bellum effecit"; *ibid.*, p. 8: "Siquidem ut missa faciamus multa nefandissima scelera quae hac miserrima aetate vigent…"

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 10: "Non detraham mortuis, nec ullum incusare audebo, qui Christi

the dangers to Christianity are not only external, but also a consequence of an internal crisis.

At the end of the speech there is yet another example of the pattern of using expressions of serious danger and crisis,[26] drawing on an episode from classical history (the struggle and victory of Scipio Nasica over Tiberius Gracchus),[27] followed by hortatory rhetoric addressed to the pope,[28] and concluding with a comparison between a biblical model, Solomon, the only king who was permitted to build the temple in Jerusalem, and the pope, who is urged to fight against the Turks and achieve victory.[29]

The second oration (pp. 19–27) is delivered by Bindacio Ricasoli and is addressed to Ferdinand, the king of Sicily, in order to encourage him to join battle against the Turks.[30] It does not deal directly with the coming *diluvium* and with the religious crisis. I shall deal with other themes appearing in this oration later.

The third oration (pp. 27–32) is delivered by Paulo Antonio Soderini and is addressed to the Senate of Venice. He praises Venice and compares its citizens to those of ancient cities. He also emphasizes what he regards as the central feature of their republic, *concordia*:

> Neither the Athenians, [inhabitants] of the domicile of wisdom, nor the Spartans, worshippers of laws, nor the Romans, superior to all other mortals in everything, were distinguished by this glory. Moreover, so great was your *concordia* that in your empire neither a Sulla nor a Marius would be known. Also your justice and gravity are praised in the most engaging manner all over the world.[31]

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vicem in terris gesserit, sed hoc omnes profitentur nostrorum nefandissimam avaritiam nostram ferme religionem funditus evertisse."

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 13: "… in aetate matura et gravi; "… ut etiam in tanto discrimine certantem aliquando videamus."

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 13: "P. Scipionem Nasicam collecta in sinum toga Tiberii Gracchi furorem extinxisse legimus…"

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14: "Pium vero praedecessorem tuum annis et morbo confectum in hunc immitissimum Christiani nominis hostem ipsi armatum contendere vidimus."

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 14: "Sed veluti nec David nec ceteris regibus, sed tantum Salomoni promissum est, ut templum immortali Deo ab eo Hierosolymis conderetur, sic nostro iudicio et voto huius bellicosissimi Imperatoris tibi uni victoria reservatur."

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 20: "… me hortatur ut in hoc gravissiomo bello quod iam viginti ferme annos cum immitissimo barbaro gerimus, ad Maiestatem tuam supplex accedam ac non verear pro communi salute ab elegantissimo Rege auxilia implorare."

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 28: "Non Athenienses, sapientiae domicilium, non Lacedaemonii, cultores legum, non Romani, ceteris mortalibus omni in re praestantiores, hac laude claruerunt. Tanta praeterea vobis [Patres Veneti] concordia fuit, ut nullus Sulla aut Marius sit in

The term *concordia* thus represents an ideal political order.[32] The alternative is *diluvium*:

> If you want to preserve these things [*concordia* and justice], Venetian Senators, you must now muster all your strength, so that we are not flooded, to our great sorrow, by this imminent cataclysm [*diluvium*].[33]

The term *diluvium*, which stands for a total catastrophe, obviously has biblical connotations, since it is not very frequent in classical Latin, and usually means 'flooding', while in the Bible it stands for a central and dramatic cataclysm which covered the whole world. It is thus a very pertinent image for representing the Turkish threat to both the political and religious institutions of the Christian West. Here, I think, we have a very clear expression of the deep sense of crisis which was common to many Florentine humanists and chroniclers during the last decades of the *Quattrocento*. The dichotomy *concordia* vs *diluvium* describes a crisis in which there is no middle term, only two extreme and opposite states, one totally good and the other totally evil. Perfect order and harmony on the one hand, and complete destruction on the other, are the only options. But this need for political *concordia* is immediately put in a clear religious context:

> We have decided to proclaim before princes and senates what is in the hearts of all pious men, out of our singular love of the Church. We do so not relying on our eloquence, which is either non-existent or hollow, but in order that Christ, the greatest priest and emperor, who alone scrutinizes the hearts of men, may see that He did not give us a mind

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vestro imperio cognitus. Iustitia quoque vestra et gravitas toto terrarum orbe pulcherrime praedicatur."

[32] This idea was of course very common among classical authors; see, e.g., Cicero's political slogan: "Concordia ordinum et consensus omnium bonorum." The expression *concordia ordinum* and *consensus* or *consensio omnium bonorum* appear separately in a number of speeches and letters from the 60s BC. Their combination into one slogan is probably the work of modern scholars, especially Hermann Strassburger, *Concordia Ordinum. Eine Untersuchung zur Politik Ciceros* (Amsterdam 1956, first limited edition, Borna 1931). See Rachel Birnbaum, *The Concept of Bonus in Cicero's Works*, PhD. diss. Tel-Aviv 1980 (Hebrew), pp. 156–159, and notes on pp. 389–391, where the references are collected. Other examples are Sallust, *Jugurtha* X: "Equidem ego vobis regnum trado firmum, si boni eritis; sin mali, imbecillum. Nam concordia parvae res crescunt, discordia maximae dilabuntur." These same words of Sallust are cited in Seneca, *Ep.* 94, 46. See also in Livy, 2, 1.6 and 11: "Dissipatae res nondum adultae discordia foret, quas fovit tranquilla moderatio imperii eoque nutriendo perduxit ut bonam frugem libertatis maturis iam viribus ferre posset"; "Id mirum quantum profuit ad concordiam civitatis iungendosque patribus plebis animos."

[33] *Scritti inediti…* p. 28: "Si haec retinere vultis, Patres Veneti, nunc summa ope nitendum est, ne hoc eminenti diluvio luctuosissime obruamur."

> in vain; for a grave punishment awaits those who have not used their counsel and arms against this savage monster.[34]

What is important is the mention of Christ and his severe punishment for those who do not contribute to the war against the Turks. This gives this particular war both political and religious connotations. And so, instead of relying on *eloquentia nostra*, our rhetoric should rely on *divina pietas*:

> Since we have taken for ourselves the liberty of speaking, relying on divine piety, the oration which will be delivered before the great senate will be such as has come from the bottom of our heart, not one motivated by enmities or favour. The nation of God very often listened to Daniel, who was not an adult; in the same way both Scipios, while very young, most salubriously counselled their country.[35]

b. *Classical, Biblical, and Patristic Allusions. The Disappearance of the Doctors*

In the first declamation, Cavalcanti compares the present war to the struggle between David and Goliath and the struggle between Cicero and Catiline:

> For I know that a very wise man, who has grown old in the study of Sacred Scripture, did not learn yesterday with what vigour the young and virtually unarmed David defeated the most powerful Philistine, nor has it escaped him with what vigour Cicero, at that time consul of Rome, by means of his counsel and wisdom subdued the fury of Catiline. Thus we should make this war, most blessed Father, against that most warlike prince, who seems to despise our forces since he exults in his great courage, in his innumerable resources, great wealth, continuous victories, after the complete conquest of Greece, and the overthrow of many Asian rulers.[36]

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[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 28–29: "Quod cum omnibus piis hominibus cordi existat, nos singulari amore in Ecclesiam incensi apud principes et senatus decrevimus declamare non eloquentia nostra freti, quae vel nulla vel rauca est, sed ut pontifex et imperator maximus Christus, qui corda solus hominum scrutatur, hanc mentem non frustra nobis dedisse videat, cum gravis poena maneat omnes qui consilia et arma in hoc monstrum immane non contulerunt."

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 29: "Quoniam vero dicendi libertatem divina pietate freti nobis assumpsimus, talis apud amplissimum Senatum oratio habebitur, qualis ex intimo pectore non odiis aut gratia vexato exorta est. Danielem non adultum populus Dei saepe audiebat, uterque Africanus admodum iuvenis saluberrime patriae consulvit."

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 5: "Scio enim virum sapientissimum et in sacris litteris senescentem, quo robore David adolescens ac ferme inermis fortissimum Philisten vicerit, nuper non didicisse, nec et quoque effugere M. Tulium urbis huius tempestate illa consulem L. Catilinae furorem consilio et sapientia domuisse. Gerendum est igitur nobis hoc

This comparison brings out both the spiritual and political aspects of the present crisis. It also shows the importance of using classical and biblical images in an exhortation to deal with the threat. Cavalcanti praises the pope for his knowledge not only of the Scriptures but also of 'our' history, that is, the history of ancient Rome, represented here by the Catilinarian conspiracy and the Mithridatic wars.[37] Another comparison made here is with the liberation of the people of Israel from Egypt.[38] Cavalcanti emphasizes two points: the importance of imitating the biblical model and of prayer.[39] There is nothing new in the appeal for prayer, although an earlier humanist like Bruni would not make an appeal to prayer, and only uses a formal prayer in his peroration. Nor is there anything new in the appeal to the ancients as models of imitation: Bruni and others have already done this.[40] But the combination of the more traditional religious aspect and the humanist classical element is new. The author of the declamation did not have to choose the pope as the addressee. He may well have chosen him because he combined in his person supreme political leadership and supreme religious authority, and was thus an obvious candidate to lead a war which is both political and religious. Moreover, this particular pope was also endowed with wisdom, in a context which is clearly classical,[41] and thus he can follow the ancient examples as well.

The second oration, by Bindacio Ricasoli, will be discussed also at the end of this section, in a section entitled: 'on military glory as a liberal art'. But one notices that the examples given are from ancient

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bellum, Beatissime Pater, cum bellicosissimo principe, qui sua virtute, innumeris copiis, maximis opibus, assiduis victoriis exultans, perdomita universa Graeca, prostratis multis Asiaticis ducibus, vires nostras negligere videatur."

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7: "Utinam, Beatissime Pater, hoc in loco timiditatis merito accusarer, nec tantum gravitatis crebrae victoriae attulissent; sed, ut arbitror, in sacris litteris diutissime versatus historias quoque nostras non neglexisti. Itaque aliquando a te lectitatum est quando cum Romanorum discrimine Mithridates ille hostis Latinorum acerrimus post aliquot commemorandas victorias saepissime in nostros irrumpere ausus fuerit; nam cum vincere didicisset, diuturni belli illius, quod quadraginta ferme annos strenue ab utrisque gestum est, nunquam Romanus populus, nisi Mithridate insidiis suorum vita functo, victoria est potitus."

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 11: "Imitare, quaesumus, Moysen et Aaron, quorum precibus populus ille durissimae cervicis a maximo discrimine saepissime est liberatus."

[39] Prayers are considered to be even more effective than weapons; see *ibid.*, pp. 11–12: "Post humillimas ac devotissimas preces tuas, quibus magis quam armis confidimus, principes nostri et senatus ad commune bellum excitandi et convocandi sunt."

[40] On Bruni see below n. 59.

[41] See the first passage from this oration quoted in section c, n. 63 below.

Greek and Roman history (Caesar, Sulla, Philip and Alexander, Scipio the younger, Socrates, Darius, Aeneas, Latinus, and the seven kings of Rome), and the one author cited is Sallust.

I have already quoted a number of passages from the third oration, by Paulo Antonio Soderini, in which the need for the classical *concordia* is emphasized, and the alternative is the biblical *diluvium*. Let us cite again one passage:

> Neither the Athenians, [inhabitants] of the domicile of wisdom, nor the Spartans, worshippers of laws, nor the Romans, superior to all other mortals in everything, were distinguished by this glory. Moreover, so great was your *concordia* that in your empire neither a Sulla nor a Marius would be known. Also your justice and gravity are praised in the most engaging manner all over the world.[42]

The examples are Athens, Sparta, Rome, Sulla, and Marius. In other passages, Soderini emphasizes the centrality of religion and divine piety to the present situation. But when he apologizes for his lack of rhetoric, due to his youth and inexperience, he gives as examples of young orators who benefited their audience the biblical Daniel and the Roman Scipios. The passage has already been quoted at the end of the first section and because of its importance to more than one theme it will be quoted again in the next section. Here I shall quote only the last sentence:

> The nation of God very often listened to Daniel, who was not an adult; in the same way both Scipios, while very young, most salubriously counselled their country.[43]

We notice that a declamation written *singulari amore in Ecclesiam*[44] joins together the biblical example of Daniel and the people of God with the Roman and pagan example of the two Scipios. This is not *teste David cum Sibylla*, since the Sibylline Oracles were believed to be divine prophecies. This is a new manner of doing theology, where the Bible and the ancient classics are used side by side—and, to anticipate, no medieaval Christian source is mentioned.

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[42] *Scritti inediti*… p. 28: "Non Athenienses, sapientiae domicilium, non Lacedaemonii, cultores legum, non Romani, ceteris mortalibus omni in re praestantiores, hac laude claruerunt. Tanta praeterea vobis [Patres Veneti] concordia fuit, ut nullus Sulla aut Marius sit in vestro imperio cognitus. Iustitia quoque vestra et gravitas toto terrarum orbe pulcherrime praedicatur."

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 29: "Danielem non adultum populus Dei saepe audiebat, uterque Africanus admodum iuvenis saluberrime patriae consulvit."

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

The two political and cultural entities have become two aspects of the same entity. One is not surprised to find the author, in the passage immediately following, calling on *omnes Latini* (!) to unify their forces against the Turks.[45] The dichotomy classical *concordia* vs biblical *diluvium* comes up again in the descriptions of the crisis at the end of the oration.[46] Again, the Bible and the classics are now part of the same mixture. With all the tensions which will be discussed in the following chapters, we can see here the glimmerings of a new theology.

The fourth oration (pp. 33–39), delivered by Francesco Berlingheri, is addressed to Galeazzo Sforza. Here, too, the descriptions of the difficulties caused by the war against the Turks are coupled—yet again—with the image of the *diluvium* and the expression of deep concern for Italy.[47] The combination of *militares laudes* and *liberales artes* also appears here,[48] as well as powerful descriptions of the political and religious crisis of the age.[49] All these issues are illustrated by the historical examples of

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 29: "Nam si fieri posset ut mente et animo omnes Latini idem sentiremus, victricia illa nostra omnium gentium arma ad tutanda paterna regna immane monstrum impulissent [notice the parallel between *paterna regna* here and the *patria* of the Scipios in the last passage quoted]"; "Sed inter fratres coniunctissimos dissidia nonnunquam orta sunt."

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 30: "Sed quoniam orantibus amplissimus semper campus patuit, alterum vobis necessarium esse puto, ut civili concordia mentes et pectora teneantur"; "Itaque si audeo sapientissimos viros omniumque iustissimos ad civilem cohortari concordiam, nemo mihi succenseat, nemo existimet oratione mea dignitati vestrae derogari, cuius si videretur exordium, non secus me locutum, ac si in civitate vestra clarissima natus et eruditus essem, quilibet sana mente iudicaret. Quin etiam scio nonnullos fore qui has nostras declamationes vestro nomine et gratia editas arbitrentur, tanta vehementia, tanto ardore, tanta denique cura elaboravimus, ut mortales et posteros nostra oratio testetur hoc diluvium pios vates praesagisse et nos adhuc tenellos et in arte dicendi tirones ideo non conticuisse, quod nimium acerbum, luctuosum et grave malum pulcherrimae provinciae nostrae minaretur"; *ibid.*, p. 32: "Utinam vanum me posteri praedicent, et quisque stulte hoc diluvium eminens et instans praesagisse putetur!"

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 34: "Non audebo disserere coram principe militari gloria fulgentissimo de gravitate huius belli, quo praeclarae civitates et munitissima regna luctuosissime corruerunt. Scio te novisse hunc potentissimum ductorem nulla in re Hannibale aut Attila inferiorem esse, nec vereor quin saepe cogitaris nulla a nostris opportuna adhiberi remedia quibus tanto diluvio eminenti obstare valeamus. Quo magis tibi nitendum est atque elaborandum ne cadat Italia, ne serviatur barbaro antequam victores omnium gentium et populorum enses deduxerint."

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 36: "Duae res praecipue Alexandro Macedonum clarissimo regi et nostro C. Caesari summae gloriae fuerunt, quia videlicet militaribus laudibus liberalium artium adiunxerint disciplinam, et illos summa in potestate constitutos gravissimarum iniuriarum saepissime oblivisci."

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37: "Quid cultui nostro ex tribus orbis partibus est conservatum? O tempora omnium infelicissima! O miseranda religio nostra! O lacrimabile saeculum!

Hannibal, Attila, Alexander, '*noster*' Caesar, and although the "immortal memory of Christ" is mentioned, not a single Christian example is cited.

The fifth oration (pp. 39–46), delivered by Carlo Marsupini, is addressed to the Florentine senate. Both the image of the *diluvium* and the notion of *concordia* as a political ideal also appear here.[50] The need for *concordia* is here based on the ancient prophecies for the future of the Roman empire, and the Florentines are addressed as *nos Romano genere oriundi*:

> I shall speak openly and freely about what I fear. These were the prophecies for the city of Rome: as long as the citizens of Rome were held in *concordia*, they would achieve victory over all nations, races, and kings, nor would this illustrious city fall unless by its own sword. We, who have originated from the Roman race, have most gloriously conquered all neighbouring nations and many most powerful kings and leaders by making *concordia* our commander. We have maintained nearly the same customs, institutions, structures, civilization, and magistracies.[51]

The opposite term here to *concordia* is *discordia*, and Marsupini refers to an ancient orator in his call to avoid *discordiae* and *dissidia*:

> If indeed in our successes there appeared a most similar fate to that of our ancestors, all the good and pious men should justly be afraid in adversities, lest this most beautiful city should be destroyed by civil dissensions (*discordiis*), especially since we are most piously warned by our

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Ab universa Asia idolis inservitur. In nulla Africa provincia, aut saltem sacello, Christi immortalis memoria remansit. At quam miserrimum est, quam luctuosissimum piis hominibus, si qui in tanta desperatione restant, florente Italia omnibus bonis, immitissimum barbarorum regem Europam non dico bello tentasse, sed altero fulgentissimo oculo orbatam non cum nostra laude reddidisse!"; *ibid.*, p. 39: "Sed hoc dixisse velim campos ad res gloriosissime gerendas nunquam tibi patuisse ampliores, quam si hoc moestissimo tempore acerbissimo metu liberatam tua invictissima dextera Italiam conservabis." Notice the emphasis on the religious aspect in the first passage and on the political aspect in the second.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 41: "Nam devictis contusisque Venetis omnibus Christi nomen profitentibus immane diluvium immineret"; *ibid.*, p. 42: "Sed concordia opus est, Florentini Patres, quacum haec civitas fatale est omnium hostium victoria potiatur"; "Concordia et civilia otia vestra defatigatum animum perpetuo recrearunt."

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 42: "Dicam aperte et libero ore quod timeam. Vaticinia urbis Romae haec fuerant: dum Quirites concordia tenerentur, omnium populorum, omnium gentium, omnium regum esse victoria potituros, nec cadere posse eam egregiam urbem, nisi suo gladio laberetur. Nos Romano genere oriundi concordia duce omnes finitimos populos, multos potentissimos reges et duces gloriosissime superavimus. Mores, instituta, aedificia, cultus, officia prope simillima habuimus."

> orator that there is no city which is so firm that it could not be destroyed most easily by enmities and disagreements.[52]

Even the appeal to John the Baptist, Florence's patron saint, is full of classical terms like *res publica, egregii cives, senatus, forum*, and John the Baptist himself is described as *qui nostro imperio praeest*.[53] To make the classical allusions quite clear, he mentions in the next sentence "the Romans our ancestors" and refers to an observation of Sallust concerning a happy period in Roman history.[54] At the end of this oration there is a further example of this pattern:

> By the remains of divine John, by the religion of that most sacred precursor of our faith, who always favoured this liberty, by the beautiful

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[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 42–43: "Si igitur in secundis rebus simillima fortuna cum auctoribus nostris extitit, merito in adversis omnibus bonis et piis hominibus verendum est, ne discordiis civilibus haec pulcherrima civitas evertatur, cum praecipue ab oratore nostro piissime moneamur nullam esse tam firmam civitatem quae non odiis et dissidiis facillime possit everti." This is a quotation from Cicero, *Laelius de amicitia*, 23: "Quae enim domus tam stabilis, quae tam firma civitas est, quae non odiis atque discidiis funditus possit everti?" This work of Cicero was well-known in the Middle Ages and later: see J.G.F. Powell [ed.], *Cicero On Friendship…* pp. 24–25. This is one of the rare passages where *discordia* appears. It is interesting that *concordia* and *diluvium* do not appear in this context, and the punishment for *discordiae* is *ne … haec … civitas evertatur*. Of course, *discordia* is the literal opposite of *concordia* as far as terms are concerned; but in most of these sermons the *practical* alternative to *concordia* is *diluvium*. "Give me freedom or give me death" is a modern example of a similar practical opposition.

Both *discordia* and *discidium* echo this passage of Cicero: *discidium* appears in the sentence quoted, and *discordia* appears at the end of the next sentence. The form *dissidium* appears often in the manuscripts as an alternative spelling for *discidium*, and it was used by our author and by many editors until the nineteenth century. J.N. Madvig [ed.], *M. Tullii Ciceronis de Finibus Bonorum et Malorum Libri Quinque*, 2nd ed., Copenhagen 1876, Excursus II, pp. 799–802, demonstrated "*Dissidium* non esse Latinam vocem, semperque scribendum *discidium*." He has been followed by editors ever since. In quoting ancient texts I follow the correct spelling, but in quoting Renaissance authors I follow the spelling used by them. I owe this reference to John Glucker.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 43: "Divus ille Iohannes qui nostro imperio praeest, hanc effundat e corpore animam, si quae dicturus sum gratia mortalium aut praemia commovent. In omni re publica quae praesertim amplissimo polleat imperio, necesse est esse quosdam egregios cives, quos ceteri non dico metuant, sed colant et venerentur quibusque et in senatu et in foro tanta adhibeatur fides, ut nihil ab illis iniustum aut inutile private et publice fieri posse credatur."

[54] *Ibid.*: "Nam apud Romanos, ex quibus orti sumus, singulis temporibus tales viros fuisse reperio; nec sum oblitus elegantissimam Crispi Sallustii sententiam, qui paucorum civium virtutem cuncta patravisse in tam felicissimo imperio iudicavit [Sallust, *Cat.* 53, 4]." Refrences to Sallust are not unique to humanist writings. The writings which have reached us are extant in many manuscripts from the ninth century onwards, and were well known to educated readers a century earlier. See J.E. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, 3 vols. (Cambridge 1903–1908), vol. 1, pp. 658–659.

> appearance of this illustrious city which cruel Hannibal respected, by the bones and shades of your ancestors, I beseech you, Florentine fathers, I pray and implore you to come to the aid of this most fair body politic—the greatest and most important there has ever been—come to the aid of your children and future generations! Let all civil discords in our minds be extinguished, let us not remember the hatred which existed at any time among our citizens. Let us, vying with each other in supreme love, follow the founder of peace who was sent from heaven—banishing all unjust envy—as the keeper and protector of liberty and the defender of most cherished quiet and rest. Our only fortification is that we trust in one living God: it is necessary that there should be one salvation for all.[55]

We have here all the elements of the humanist theology mentioned so far: religious figures (John the Baptist and Christ) who are used in a political context; a classical example (Hannibal); and the ideal of *concordia* in politics and its opposite *dissidium*,[56]—where the usual contrast is with the biblical *diluvium*. The crisis caused by the Turkish threat, which had both a political and spiritual dimension, thus contributed to the new humanist theology and rhetoric in which politics and religion were inseparable. And so Ficino can conclude by encouraging the young orators:

> Fear the immortal author of all things, let his sacred religion always take first place among you. Defend your native land and cherish the people who are loyal to the republic without feeling envy; always cultivate our muses, as you have magnificently done so far.[57]

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[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 45–46: "Per reliquias divi Iohannis, per religionem illius sanctissimi fidei nostrae praecursoris, qui semper huic favit libertati, per decoram speciem huius inclitae civitatis quam ferus Hannibal coluisset, per ossa et Manes maiorum vestrorum, oro vos, Florentini Patres, supplico et obtestor, consulite huic pulcherrimo imperio, quod nunquam amplius aut maius fuit, consulite filiis vestris et posteris! Extinguantur in mentibus omnia civilia dissidia, non recordemur qui animus aliquando civibus nostris extiterit. Auctorem pacis e coelo missum, amota improba invidia, tanquam custodem et protectorem libertatis ac exoptatissimi otii conservatorem et quietis summo certatim amore prosequamur. Una nos moenia tenent, uni Deo viventi credimus: una salus sit omnibus necesse est."

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 46: "Si auctores nostri civili discordia ceciderunt, prudentes filios imitemur qui cum parentes intestinis aut aliquo morbo periisse cognoscunt, omnem adhibent curam ne invalitudo eadem illos tanquam hereditaria insequatur."

[57] *Ibid.*: "Timete immortalem omnium rerum Auctorem, eiusque sanca religio primum semper apud vos locum teneat. Defendite patriam et civibus de re publica bene sentientibus sine invidia favete, nostras colite perpetuo Musas, ut magnifice fecistis." I believe that these words, reported by Colucci, should not be regarded as mere rhetoric. The centrality and importance of religion to Ficino is shown in the next chapter.

Note again the combination between Christ the Author of all things and of our religion, and *patria*, *cives, res publica*, and *Musae*.

Ficino also praises some of the *egregii oratores* of Florence who played an important role in the city's politics.[58] We shall deal with some of these figures later in this chapter.

If we compare these declamations with some of the political speeches of an earlier generation of humanists[59] we notice one fact which stands out. The earlier humanist, in a civic speech, refers to the more relevant facts of recent history, but his ancient examples and quotations are invariably classical. Our orators regard even recent history as both political and religious, and their ancient examples and references include the Bible as a source. One thing which we do not find in all these Christian declamations is post-biblical Christian literature. Not a single Father or Doctor of the Church is mentioned.

Addition: A General Theme Treated by the Orators in a Classical Manner

A theme which seems a common humanist *topos* is the combination of weapons and literary glory, the art of war and the liberal arts. This theme appears in the two declamations addressed to individuals. The second declamation is full of references to Ferdinand II king of Sicily (1423–1494) as a man who combines the discipline of liberal arts

[58] *Ibid*., p. 47: "Reliqua sibi assumant egregii oratores quibus nostra civitas maxime pollet. Nam quid Donato Acciaiuolo facundius, quid M. Parente eruditius, quid Renuccino gravius optaretur? Bartholomaeus vero Scala qui nuper huic civitati ob facundiam civis ascriptus est, Landinus clarissimus vates vesterque sanctissimus praeceptor, Bernardus elegantissimus rhetor quanta admiratione digni sunt!"

[59] See e.g., Leonardo Bruni's *Laudatio Florentinae urbis*, ed. Hans Baron in his *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni* (Chicago 1968), pp. 232–263: "Plato Atheniensis, omnium philosophorum longissime princeps" (240); "Lege Latinas, lege Grecas historias" (241); "Troya, nobilissimum totius *Asie culmen et celitum* (ut inquit ille) *egregius labor*, bis classe capta et diruta est; primo Herculis et Telamonis repentino adventu, secundo Agamenonis et Ulixis fraude. Capi florentissima civitas nullo modo poterat, nisi vicinum mare prebuisset facultatem" (*ibid*); *Oratio in funere Iohannis Strozze* ed. Paolo Viti in, *Opere letterarie e politiche di Leonardo Bruni* (Torino 1996), pp. 708–748: "Lex fuit vetusta Solonis, ut opinor" (708); "Ad cuius fatum quoniam illa concurrunt omnia que Soloniane legis providentia sanxit" (710); "Tusci veteres Italie dominatores, et Romani, qui terrarum omnium virtute sibi et armis imperium pepererunt"; (714) "Regibus, inquit historicus, boni quam mali suspiciores sunt, semperque his aliena virtus formidolosa est" (718); "Iam vero grecarum litterarum cognitio, que septingentis amplius annis per Italiam obsoleverat, a civitate nostra revocata est atque reducta, ut et summos philosophos et admirabiles oratores ceterosque prestantissimos disciplina homines, non per enigmata interpretationum ineptarum, sed de facie ad faciem intueri valeremus" (722).

with military glory.[60] The fourth declamation, addressed to Galeazzo Sforza duke of Milan (1444–1476), also dwells on this combination of military glory and liberal arts.[61] The praise of these two men as combining military glory with learning or wisdom has already been announced in the first oration.[62] This seems to show that the *topos* of this combination, and its application to these two military leaders might well have been discussed in the circle of Ficino's students. The importance of *ingenium* or *virtus animi* for the success of *res militaris* is emphasized in a passage frequently quoted in late Latin authors who were widely read in the Middle Ages: Sallust, *Cat.* I, 5-II, 7 (The same sentiments are expressed by Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* III, 3.19, and Cicero, *Cato Maior* 17). The examples used by our orators to support this general 'truth' are all taken from ancient Greek and Roman history, although biblical examples such as David at the time of his military career, Moses, Josiah and Nehemiah, were available. If our orators had wished to go beyond biblical history, they could refer to Constantine or Justinian; but as we have seen, they do not go beyond the Bible. The humanists would have a vested interest in emphasizing the usfulness of their education for political and military leadership.

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[60] *Scritti inediti…* p. 20: "Siquidem in multis calamitatibus nostris hoc non mediocriter bonos et pios homines consolatur quod Italiam ii teneant principes qui non solum armis et militari disciplina, verum etiam liberalium artium gloria incendantur"; p. 24: "Itaque cum proelio strenuum et consilio sapientem verum regem esse deceat, utrumque consecutus litterarum et bonarum artium disciplinam bellicis laudibus coniunxisti"; *ibid.*: "Quantum vero tibi gloriae affert, quod eos per bonas artes et litterarum disciplinam excolendos praestitisti!"; pp. 38–39: "Corporis autem et fortunae animique immortalis munera tunc summae gloriae ducuntur, cum qui ea possidet fungi beneficio non ignorat. Non laudatur Iugurtha, non Sertorius, non post civilia bella Sulla et Marius, etsi in talibus viris manca fortitudo non videbatur; Epaminondas, Masinissa, duo Decii, duo Africani his merito praeponuntur. Non est de te dubitandum, Dux fortissime, cum, ut saepe dictum est et monumentis celebrabitur, sapientissimus habearis." Note yet again how a generalization is being based on examples from ancient Greek and Roman history.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 36: "Duae res praecipue Alexandro Macedonum clarissimo regi et nostro C. Caesari summae gloriae fuerunt, quia videlicet militaribus laudibus liberalium artium adiunxerint disciplinam, et illos summa in potestate constitutos gravissimarum iniuriarum saepissime oblivisci."

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 12: "Est namque nobis christianissimus et potentissimus rex Ferdinandus et armis et litterarum gloria non impar clarissimo genitori suo et, ut vere dicam, ob egregiam virtutem genere et familia sua dignissimus"; *ibid.*: "… Ligurum dux ille tuus Galeazus Sfortia qui floret armis, pollet opibus, claret ingenio et facundia…"

c. *The Attitude to Rhetoric*

At the beginning of the first oration Cavalcanti had said something about his attitude towards rhetoric:

> But since also supreme wisdom is added to your great dignity as a pontiff, once we have set forth what we are going to say, we will get down to the narration itself setting aside oratorical ornaments.[63]

This is not the ancient rhetorical trick, where the speaker begins by saying that he is going to use ordinary language, without rhetorical ornaments, because he has no experience in public speaking.[64] Our orator shows by his very words that he is at home in rhetorical theory, and makes his choice to avoid rhetorical ornaments within the rules of rhetoric. In rhetorical theory, the *prooemium* is not just a description of what one should say in the speech, but also, since it is right at the beginning, when the audience is still listening, rhetorical ornaments are used to impress them with the importance of the issue, the justice of one's own cause, and the like. This is part of what in modern terms is called *captatio benivolentiae*. Our orator prefers to make a brief statement of intent, thus avoiding a full rhetorical *prooemium*, and to proceed immediately to the second part of the speech, the *narratio* (διήγησις). In this part, plain language without ornaments is precisely what rhetorical theory requires.[65] The total rejection of rhetorical tricks and ornaments, which we find in one of Pico's letters, is a later phenomenon, and may well be peculiar to Pico even in the 1480s.[66] But Cavalcanti is

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 4: "Sed quoniam pontificio tuo maximo summa quoque sapientia est adiuncta, cum proposuerimus quid dicturi sumus, ad narrationem ipsam ornamentis oratoriis posthabitis accedemus."

[64] See e.g., Plato, *Apologia*, 17c–d; Antiphon, I 1; II A, a 1; V 1.

[65] On this issue, Latin rhetorical theory followed principles established by Cicero. The orator's styles should be adopted to his various functions: "Sed quot officia oratoris, tot sunt genera dicendi: subtile in probando, modicum in delectando, vehemens in flectendo" (*Orator* 69). Cicero applies these principles to the various parts of the speech, where the beginnig should be couched in clever language, while the narration should be in plain language: "Principia verecunda, nondum elatis incensa verbis, sed *acuta sententiis* vel ad offensionem adversarii vel ad commendationem sui [this is the nearest Cicero gets to our *captatio benivolentiae*. This expression is adumbrated in *Rhet.Her.* I 1, 8: "Ab adversariorum persona benivolentia captabitur…"]. Narrationes credibiles nec historico sed prope cotidiano sermone explicatae dilucide" (*Orator* 124). A more detailed discussion of the nature of the *prooemium*, Latin *exordium*, and the *narratio*, on the lines of Cicero's theory is given by Quintilian IV 1–2. *Benivolentia* is mentioned in 1. 6, and discussed in the following paragraphs.

[66] See e.g., Pico's approach represented in his famous letter to Ermolao Barbaro

obviously also not using the scholastic thematic sermon. In fact, the verb *probare* is used only once in this oration, in the "weak" sense of recommending or approving.[67] What we have here instead is hortatory rhetoric in which—and this, as we shall see, is of some importance—both classical and biblical examples are used to highlight the present difficulties and crisis, and the need to deal with the crisis is expressed in religious and ecclesiastical, as well as in political, terms.

But expressions indicating an ambivalent attitude to rhetoric appear in other speeches. Here is what the third speaker, Paulo Antonio Soderini, says in his speech, addressed to the senate of Venice:

> We have decided to proclaim before princes and senates what is in the hearts of all pious men, out of our singular love of the Church. We do so not relying on our eloquence, which is either non-existent or hollow, but in order that Christ, the greatest priest and emperor, who alone

(1485), in Francesco Bausi [ed.], *Ermolao Barbaro, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Filosofia o eloquenza?* (Napoli 1998), p. 40: "Tanta est inter oratoris munus et philosophi pugnantia ut pugnare magis invicem non possint. Nam quid aliud rhetoris officium quam mentiri, decipere, circumvenire, praestigiari? Est enim vestrum, ut dicitis, posse pro arbitrio in candida nigrum vertere, in nigra candidum; posse, quaecunque vultis, tollere, abicere, amplificare, extenuare, dicendo; demum res ipsas magicis quasi, quod vos iactatis, viribus eloquentiae in quam libuerit faciem habitumque transformare, ut non qualia sunt suopte ingenio, sed qualia volueritis, non fiant quidem, sed, cum non sint, esse tamen audientibus appareant. Hoc totum estne quicquam aliud quam merum mendacium, mera impostura, merum praestigium"; p. 42: "Est elegans res (fatemur hoc) facundia plena illecebrae et voluptatis, sed in philosopho nec decora, nec grata. Quis mollem incessum, argutas manus, ludibundos oculos in histrione et saltatore non probaret? In cive, in philosopho, quis non improbet, arguat, abominetur?"; p. 46: "Quaerimus nos quidnam scribamus, non quaerimus quomodo; immo quomodo quaerimus, ut scilicet sine pompa et flore ullo orationis, quam nolumus ut delectabilis, venusta et faceta sit, sed ut utilis, gravis et reverenda, ut maiestatem potius ex horrore, quam gratiam ex mollitudine consequatur. Non expectamus theatri plausum, quod aures demulserit aequabilis clausula vel numerosa, quod hoc sit salsum, illud sit lepidum; sed expectamus paucorum potius prae admiratione silentium, introspicientium penitus aliquid aut de naturae adytis erutum, aut *de caelestium, de Iovis aula ad homines adductum*, tum vel aliquid ita argutum ut defendendi, ita defensum ut arguendi non sit locus"; p. 52: "Periclis orationibus elaboratis et lueulentis nihil se commoveri inquit Alcibiades, sed Socratis verbis nudis et simplicibus [Plato, *Symp.* 215e4–216a2]"; pp. 54–56: "At inquiens: 'age, damus hoc vobis, ut non sit vestrum ornate loqui; sed vestrum est certe, quod nec praestatis, ut Latine saltem; ut, si non floridis, suis tamen verbis res explicitis. Non exigo a vobis orationem comptam, sed nolo sordidam; nolo unguentatam, sed nec hircosam. Non sit lecta, sed neglecta. Non qaerimus ut delectet, sed querimur quod offendat'."

[67] *Scritti inediti…* p. 9: "Quid enim in terris esse potest probo, sapiente et erudito principe illustrius?"; "… magis ab immortali quam ab homunculo balbutiente commendari et approbari mereatur." On the typical verbs of the thematic sermon see O'Malley, *Praise and Blame…* p. 71. See also the discussion in the introduction.

> scrutinizes the hearts of men, may see that He did not give us a mind in vain; for a grave punishment awaits those who have not used their counsel and arms against this savage monster.[68]

Whether the speaker really thinks that his rhetoric is *vel nulla vel rauca*, or he is merely using the rhetorical commonplace of μείωσις, will soon become clearer. But the emphasis on divine assistance continues, this time with one classical and one biblical example. The passage has been quoted at the end of section a, but I quote it again because of its relevance to our present theme:

> Since we have taken for ourselves the liberty of speaking, relying on divine piety, the oration which will be delivered before the great senate will be such as has come from the bottom of our heart, not one motivated by enmities or favour. The nation of God very often listened to Daniel, who was not an adult; in the same way both Scipios, while very young, most salubriously counselled their country.[69]

What is common to both speakers is that, although they are aware of classical rhetoric and its techniques, they both take exception to making full use of them. Cavalcanti is doing it, as he claims, because of the wisdom of the pope to whom the speech is addressed. Yet the great reliance on classical as well as biblical examples—which I have analysed in the last section—is common to him and all other speakers, and to some extent it replaces some of the more stylistic rhetorical ornaments. Soderini pleads his youth and inexperience as his reasons for mistrusting his rhetoric; but he immediately refers to the examples of Daniel and the Scipios as young orators who were listenered to by the people. The combination between a biblical and a classical example was discussed in the last section. Here I emphasize the appeal to Daniel and the people of God in the context of the love of the Church, of Christ, and of divine piety. It seems that the religious context given to the present political crisis in these orations gives some justification to the diminshed use of rhetorical ornament.

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[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 28–29: "Quod cum omnibus piis hominibus cordi existat, nos singulari amore in Ecclesiam incensi apud principes et senatus decrevimus declamare non eloquentia nostra freti, quae vel nulla vel rauca est, sed ut pontifex et imperator maximus Christus, qui corda solus hominum scrutatur, hanc mentem non frustra nobis dedisse videat, cum gravis poena maneat omnes qui consilia et arma in hoc monstrum immane non contulerunt." This passage was already cited and discussed in n. 34 above.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 29: "Quoniam vero dicendi libertatem divina pietate freti nobis assumpsimus, talis apud amplissimum Senatum oratio habebitur, qualis ex intimo pectore non odiis aut gratia vexato exorta est. Danielem non adultum populus Dei saepe audiebat, uterque Africanus admodum iuvenis saluberrime patriae consulvit."

In all the orations in this collection, there is an admixture of classical and biblical allusions, as compared with the prevalence of classical allusions in political speeches in the previous generation. I have pointed this out in the last section. But perhaps both the readmission of biblical allusions, together with the emphasis on the religious nature of the political crisis, indicate not just the influence of the more traditional style of sermons by professional preachers: after all, these *declamationes* are not sermons but exercises in political rhetoric, and more specifically in the *genus deliberativum*. All this seems to point to a change of atmosphere, in which the separation between the civic and the religious has broken down. It is true that the Turkish danger has a religious as well as a political aspect. But this, I would argue, is not the whole story. After all, we see such an admixture of the classical and the political with the biblical and the religious in authors as different as Caroli and Ficino. A few decades earlier, Bruni, in a speech dealing with a political crisis, employs a host of classical allusions and not a single biblical one.[70]

2. *Ficino's* Praedicationes

Let us move now from the students to their teacher, and examine Ficino's Latin sermons.[71] It seems that what we have here are the Latin drafts of his sermons, which were most probably delivered in Italian. Some parts of these sermons originated in his *De Christiana religione*; and a full discussion of these issues will be reserved to chapter three of this book. Each of the sermons is divided into thematic parts. I shall not analyse everything discussed in each sermon, but concentrate on ideas which Ficino has drawn from the new Platonic and Neoplatonic

[70] See above n. 59.

[71] Marsilio Ficino, *Opera omnia*, 2 vols. (Basel 1576; repr. Torino 1959, 1962), vol. 1, pp. 473–493. Kristeller already related Colucci's work to Ficino's *Praedicationes*, *Exhortatio ad Bellum contra barbaros*, and some other 'spiritual' letters which Ficino regarded as *declamationes*, in his 'Lay Religious Tradition…' pp. 112–121, but his attitude to this part of Ficino's writings is problematic, as we can see on p. 117: "The other pieces included in that collection all have the same moralizing and edifying character…" With regard to Ficino's *Praedicationes* he points out on p. 115 that they "should find a place in the regular history of sacred eloquence since they follow traditional patterns of preaching, although they do contain at certain points some of the characteristic philosophical conceptions of Ficino." As I will try to show, we have more than that in Ficino's *Praedicationes*.

sources; on Ficino's reliance on biblical and classical sources; on the few patristic references and their significance; and on the total absence of the *Doctores*. I shall then analyse, as a specimen, one part of a sermon, in which biblical verses are interpreted in accordance with ideas taken from ancient philosophy.

In the proem to all the sermons Ficino discusses their different parts and themes, as well as his method:

> First, we shall deal with the immortality of the soul, a [theme] which pertains to life. [We shall do so] by three means: either by reasons or by arguments or by modes. We shall confirm the immortality of the soul in whichever manner—of these three—suits us.[72]

What is interesting here is that Ficino does not mention syllogisms, demonstrations, or refutations, so common in scholastic theology and in the thematic sermon, but rather a less formal manner of persuasion.

In the first part of the first sermon, Ficino distinguishes between two different natures: temporal, heavy, corporeal, and mortal in animals; light and eternal in angels. These qualities are determined by the natural inclination of bodies, whether upwards or downwards.[73] So far we are in an Aristotelian framework (except for the angels). But then we have a third nature which can be inclined both upwards and downwards, so that we must assume that it contains both types of qualities.[74] This is our human soul, which through its senses is temporal, and through its intellect is eternal.[75] Here we are no longer in the

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[72] *Ibid.*, p. 473: "Primo quidem de animae Immortalitate tractabimus. Quod quidem pertinebit ad vitam. Idque tribus vel rationibus vel persuasionibus vel modis. Quibus libet confirmabimus." *Modus* in formal logic can mean any qualification of a statement, like 'generally', 'always', 'in many cases'. More strictly, it refers to degrees of necessity, and mainly possibility, plain reality, and necessity. But here *modus* has a different meaning: see below, n. 117 and context.

[73] *Ibid.*: "In omni re naturali, per continuam naturalemque eius inclinationem solemus naturae proprietatem investigare, exempli causa. Per inclinationem ad descensum, coniicimus in quovis corpore gravitatem esse. Per inclinationem similiter ad ascensum, in esse invenimus levitatem"; "Nempe bruta videmus ad caduca tantum praecipitari. Intellectus autem angelicos ad aeterna solum se erigere cogitamus. Quamobrem illic quidem solam in brutis naturam caducam. Hinc vero solam in angelis aeternam esse concludimus."

[74] *Ibid.*: "Si quoddam itaque corpus inclinationem ad utrunque comperiamus habere, utranque proprietatem possidere putabimus."

[75] *Ibid.*: "Cum igitur anima nostra communiter et assidue inclinetur ad utraque, tum temporalia, tum aeterna, utranque quasi naturam habere coniicimus, per intellectum quidem aeternam, temporalem vero sensum."

realm of Aristotelian physics but rather in a Neoplatonic framework with Christian influences.[76] Ficino, then, makes a sharp turn:

> Besides, if man, as is confirmed by many arguments, is the most perfect of all animals, he is the most perfect chiefly because of this component and ability, which is particular to him [and which] is by no means common to other animals. This, indeed, is religion alone; for some shrewder animals seem to have also traces of a certain reason, [but none of them has] judgment in matters of religion.[77]

A listener to the sermon would surely have expected to hear that this unique part and ability of man, which makes him more perfect than any other animal and which is what gives preeminence in nature to man, is the intellect in man's soul: he would be familiar with this idea at least from Sallust, *Cat.* I, 2. Ficino surprises his audience and attributes this quality instead to religion. The reason he gives, which hints at his own feeling that this is a somewhat unexpected answer, is that there are also some animals which seem to have traces of reason.[78] But still, the intellect in man's soul is different from whatever reason some animals may have, since the philosophers have shown that it makes man eternal. Religion also holds the promise of eternity for just

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[76] Aristotle, *De anima* III, 5, 430a23–25: "Χωρισθεὶς δ' ἐστὶ μόνον τοῦθ' ὅπερ ἐστί, καὶ τοῦτο μόνον ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀίδιον· οὐ μνημονεύομεν δέ, ὅτι τοῦτο μὲν ἀπαθές, ὁ δὲ παθητικὸς νοῦς φθαρτός)…" Much modern research has interpreted this as a reference to the Platonic 'reminiscence', that is, that we do not remember what happened before we were born. Ancient and medieaval commentators, such as Themistius, Philoponos, and Aquinas, interpreted it to mean that active reason, which survives our death, does not remember things which happened to us in our life. For reference to literature see Paul Siwek [ed.], *Aristotelis Tractatus de Anima* (Roma 1965), p. 334. For more evidence for the correctness of the second interpretation see W.D. Ross [ed.], *Aristotle De anima* (Oxford 1961), pp. 47–48. Plotinus, *Enn.* IV, 7, argues (mainly against the Stoics) that the whole soul is immortal. Further developments occurred in latter Neoplatonic literature. See, e.g., Carlos G. Steel, *The Changing Self. A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus* (Brussel 1978).

[77] Ficino, *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, pp. 473–474: "Praeterea, si homo, ut multis rationibus confirmatur, est animalium perfectissimus, per eam praecipue partem facultatemque perfectissimus est, quam habet ipse propriam, caeteris animantibus nullo modo communem. Haec vero sola religio est. Nam et rationis cuiusdam vestigia quaedam sagaciores bestiae videntur habere. Nullum religionis iuditium." Compare Ficino's discussion in *De Christiana religione* (*Opera omnia*… vol. 1, p. 2): "Rursus, si homo animalium mortalium perfectissimus est, in quantum homo, ob eam praecipue dotem est omnium perfectissimus, quam inter haec habet ipse propriam, caeteris animalibus non communem, ea religio est, per religionem igitur est perfectissimus."

[78] Ficino may have borrowed this idea from newly discovered Greek texts like Plutarch's *De sollertia animalium* or from Sextus' first τρόπος, παρὰ τὴν διαφορὰν τῶν ζῴων: *P.H.* I, 40–78. But his source may well be Seneca's *Ep.* 121: see below, n. 99.

souls. Thus, the philosophical discussion concerning the immortality of the soul cannot be separated from religion, since the promise of immortality is, for man, the most essential part of religion. This will be discussed in greater deatail in the next chapter.

In his discussion of religion as the most ancient occupation of man, Ficino refers to a passage in Plato's *Protagoras*.[79] Since religion contains both natural and divine truth, it cannot be false since neither natural instinct nor God can be suspected of deception.[80] What can be deceived is man's intellect when it trusts to what appears to be natural judgement, or a natural instinct, which seems to refute true religion: but considering the nature of God, this cannot be a genuine—or even a natural—refutation. This conflict is not necessary, if we remember the words of Paul on the well-known theme of *stultitia crucis* in ICor 1, 26–28.[81] It seems that when the human intellect is bound to the infallible truth of religion, it becomes harmonious with other intellects and infallible in itself. Harmony or disharmony between philosophers of the same school or *secta* or of different schools was one of the criteria in Hellenistic philosophy for approving or refuting a doctrine or a school of thought.[82]

In the same sermon, Ficino mentions only three levels of biblical interpretations: historical, moral, and allegorical, as against the traditional four mediaeval interpretations of the Scriptures: the literal,

[79] Ficino, *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, p. 474: "Item religio, ut in Prothagora probat Plato, prima omnium homini contigit, non solum ante omnes artes ad victum necessarias, sed etiam ante sermonem, atque commertia." For the reference to Plato see, *Protagoras* 322a3–8: "Επειδὴ δὲ ὁ ἄνθρωπος θείας μετέσχε μοίρας, πρῶτον μὲν διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ συγγένειαν ζῴων μόνον θεοὺς ἐνόμισεν, καὶ ἐπεχείρει βωμούς τε ἱδρύεσθαι καὶ ἀγάλματα θεῶν· ἔπειτα φωνὴν καὶ ὀνόματα ταχὺ διηρθρώσατο τῇ τέχνῃ, καί οἰκήσεις καὶ ἐσθῆτας καὶ ὑποδέσεις καὶ στρωμνὰς καὶ τὰς ἐκ γῆς τροφὰς ηὕρετο." See also the discussion of the first part of this quotation in the next chapter.

[80] *Ibid.*: "Cum vero etiam maxime omnium fit communis, et firma, sequitur ut maxime omnium sit naturalis. Et quia instigante Deo, rudibus statim hominibus est inserta, non solum maxime naturalis est, sed etiam divina, quam maxime. Naturale vero speciei iudicium falli non potest. Neque fallit naturalis instinctus. Multoque minus fallit Deus summa veritas atque bonitas, aeternitatem religionem promittens, speque eiusmodi praesentibus tum bonis expolians, tum malis affligens." I shall discuss this double nature of religion in the next chapter.

[81] *Ibid.*: "Audi Paulum Corinthiis ita dicentem: Videte vocationem vestram fratres. Quia non multum sapientes secundum carnem, non multi potentes, non multi nobiles, sed quae stulta sunt mundi eligit Deus, ut confundat sapientes, et quae infirma sunt mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat fortia. Et quae ignobilia mundi et contemptibilia elegit Deus, et ea quae non sunt, ut ea quae sunt destrueret."

[82] See e.g., Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* VIII, 257.

moral, allegorical, and anagogical or spiritual. Ficino's historical level of the Gospel, which replaces the literal sense, is most important in the context of humanist theology. It is related not only to the new humanistic methods and sensibilities of philology and history, but also to the double aspect of religion: the natural and the divine. The Gospel, which represents the truth of religion, also expresses this double aspect or nature: the historical and moral interpretations represent the natural and organic aspect of this truth, while the allegorical interpretation represents its divine aspect. The three hierarchies of angels which are equated to the three levels of evangelical truth have an important role to play:

> Just as everyone of us is guided and persuaded by some angel towards the good, yet [everyone of us] is incited at random by some bad spirits, so Christ was guided by the Holy Spirit, which, during the rites of baptism, appeared to his eyes and ears and soon persuaded his intellect to go into the desert, that is, abandoning harmful dealings with men in order to devote [himself] to fasting, prayer, and contemplation, until he no longer struggled there against flesh and blood, but rather against the chief demons of the misty air, whom he overcame with fasting, prayer, [and] contemplation, showing us by example that even in a perfect condition danger awaits us from demons and also that it can be conquered, as well as [indicating] the counter stratagems by which it is conquered. The Platonists also confirm the temptations of demons, and how they are expelled by the same remedies.[83]

Comparing Christ's relationship to the Holy Spirit to man's position between good angels and bad spirits, Ficino refers to the struggle between Christ and Satan in the desert, as in Matthew 4, 1–11. After Christ's baptism, the Holy Spirit persuaded his intellect to go into the desert. Persuasion is once again the only way which Ficino mentions of causing someone to act. But *persuasio* does not appear in the biblical text. Christ was not persuaded but rather was led by the spirit (*Tunc Iesus ductus est in desertum ab Spiritu*). There is also no mention of the chief

[83] Ficino, *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, pp. 474–475: "Quemadmodum unusquisque nostrum ab angelo quodam regitur persuadeturque ad bonum, a quibusdam vero spiritibus malis passim incitatur ad malum, ita Iesus regebatur a Spiritu sancto. Qui postquam in baptismis oculis eius auribusque apparuit mox eius intellectui persuasit, ut in desertum iret, noxia videlicet hominum commertia deserens, ieiunio, orationi contemplationique vacaturus, ut non ibi iam adversus carnem sanguinemque certaret, sed adversus principes caliginosi aeris daemones, quos ieiunio, oratione, contemplatione superans, nobis praeberet exemplum, tum in statu perfecto nobis a daemonibus periculum imminere, tum etiam expugnari posse, et quibus repugnaculis expugnare. Platonici quoque confirmant tentamenta daemonum, et quomodo eisdem remediis expellantur."

demons of the dark air but only the *diabolus*, διάβολος. Ficino interprets the biblical description, adding to it the demons which he derives from the *Platonici*, the Neoplatonic philosophers, and adding *persuasio*, a key term in ancient rhetoric.[84] The first sermon thus contains references and allusions to biblical and classical texts and no reference to any patristic text. The only hidden allusion to something mediaeval is the silent omission of the anagogical from the list of biblical interpretations.

In the first part of the second sermon, dealing with the life of the immortal soul, Ficino, while criticizing corporeal stimuli, mentions three means of controlling them:

> The influence of virtue (*honestas*) truth (*veritas*) religion (*religio*) often holds back corporeal stimuli.[85]

The examples given are Plato, Xenocrates, Origen, Persian Magi, Egyptian priests, and Pythagorean philosophers.[86] Ficino then says that the sanctity and martyrdoms of Christians testify even more to the victory of the mind (*mens*) over the body.[87] But the absence of both the patristic tradition (Origen, whose status as a Father of the Church was problematic and much discussed in patristic and scholastic theology,[88] is treated here as belonging more to a Platonic context) and the scholastic tradition in this discussion is again notable.

In the context of discussing the struggle between corporeal and spiritual substances, Ficino emphasizes the gap between man and God by using certain Neoplatonic premises. He argues that the division of the rational soul into two parts, the intellect and the will, and its separation from the body and from all corporeal matters is the reason

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[84] If we can trust our dictionaries, the common Ciceronian term was *suasio*; although *persuasio* already appears at least once in his *De inventione* I, 5, 6. *Persuasio* becomes normal in silver Latin literature including Quintilian.

[85] Ficino, *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, p. 475: "Saepe enim ab incitamentis corporeis abstinet, honestatis, vel veritatis, vel religionis, gratia."

[86] *Ibid.*: "Cum Plato noster domandi corporis gratia salubrem Atticae locum Academiam habitandam elegit, nonne animus eius corporali adversabatur? Cum Xenocrates dilectus Platonis discipulus, et Origenes eorum sectator exusserunt sibi virilia, quo libidinis incendia prorsus extinguerent, nonne iniussus animus bellum membris corporis indicabat. Ante hos Magi Persarum, Aegyptii Sacerdotes, Pythagorici Philosophi, ut Venerem enervarent, et sobrii forent ad contemplandum, mero et carnibus abstinebant."

[87] *Ibid.*: "Sed sanctimonia, martyriaque Christianorum multo magis victoriam mentis erga corpus testificantur."

[88] See Max Schar, *Das Nachleben des Origines in Zeitalter der Humanismus* (Basel 1979). See also the discussion of Origen in chapter four, with further references.

for its ability to deploy the power of the intellect and the will more perfectly. Although the distinction between the intellect and the will is a Christian idea which was often discussed in scholastic literature,[89] the only author cited here is Plato and the dialogues mentioned are *Phaedo*, *Crito*, and *Apology*.[90] When the rational soul is separated from the body, the intellect becomes divine and the will takes great joy in divine matters, as if they were very similar to itself.[91] The conclusion is that the body cannot be the source of the rational soul.[92] There is nothing

[89] See e.g., Peter Lombard, *Sententiae*, II, dist. 26, cap. 6; Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, *visio secunda*, *collatio* 3; William of Ockham, *Quaestiones in libros Physicorum Aristotelis*, *quaestio* 127.

[90] Ficino, *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, p. 476: "Praecipue quidem rationalis animae partes duae sunt, intellectus atque voluntas. Quando circa corporalia occupamur, intellectus aut nihil cernit omnino, aut non syncere discernit, sensibus et phantasia deceptus. Quod plane comprobat Socrates in Phaedone. Voluntas affligitur, dum curis multis inde vexatur. Contra, quando corporalia despicit, et sopitis sensibus, expulsisque phantasmatum nubibus, nec aliter animum corpore distrahente animus per se aliquid speculatur, tunc intellectus syncere discernit fulgetque maxime. Quod etiam in his apparet, qui aut per somni quietem, aut aliam quamvis alienationem a corpore, vaticinantur. Ideo nonnulli, ut Critone et Apologia inquit Plato, prope mortem cum sunt, futura praedicunt. Quasi tunc illa videant in supernis spiritibus praescripta. Quibus suapte natura fungitur animus, modo seiungatur a corpore." The references are to *Phdo*. 65a ff; *Apol*. 39c1–4; *Crit*. 44a2–b5 (?). The separation between *intellectus* and *voluntas* is of Christian origin, and it is therefore not surprising that in the next sentence, which provides a transition to *Phaedo*, *intellectus* is contrasted, not with *voluntas*, but with the Platonic *sensus et phantasia*. *Voluntas* then makes another appearance. This is a typical mixture, this time at the level of concepts, between classical and Christian ideas. See the presentation of the problem of the will in ancient and patristic contexts, and the importance of Augustine, in Guido Alliney, 'Fra Scoto e Ockham: Giovanni di Reading e il dibattito sulla libertà a Oxford (1310–1320)', in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 7 (1996), pp. 243–368; see especially pp. 244–253. See also Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Los Angeles 1982), chapter VI. See the detailed discussion of the intellect and the will in the context of moral actions in the thirteenth century under the shadow of the condemnation of 1277 in Marialucrezia Leone, *La dimensione della vita activa in Enrico di Gand* (doct. diss. of the University of Lecce 2004–2005), pp. 37–155. For a good presentation of the different philosophical schools in regard to the problem of the intellect and the will in the thirteenth century, with further references, see M.W.F. Stone, 'Moral Psychology Before 1277. The Will, *liberum arbitrium*, and moral rectitude in Bonaventure', in Thomas Pink and M.W.F. Stone [eds.], *The Will and Human Action From Antiquity to the Present Day* (London 2004), pp. 99–126; especially pp. 99–103. On pp. 103–113 we have a detailed discussion of Bonaventure's attitude, as a backgroud to the condemnations of 1270 and 1277. For a discussion of these terms in Ficino see Kristeller, *Il pensiero filisofico* … pp. 274–310; Tamara Albertini, 'Intellect and Will in Marsilio Ficino…' pp. 203–225.

[91] *Ibid*.: "Non solum vero intellectus se a corpore sevocans, quod optat clarius intuetur, divinusque evadit, ideoque se melius habet, sed et voluntas nec perturbationibus tunc affligitur, imo divinis tanquam sibi similibus summopere gaudet."

[92] *Ibid*.: "Hinc sequitur, non esse corpus animi rationalis origine⟨m⟩. Siquidem quo

new, of course, in this conclusion; but what is new is that a theological discussion is now full of Neoplatonic assumptions and references to Plato's dialogues, of which at least two (*Crito* and *Apology*) were unknown in the Middle Ages and could not be used by scholastic theologians. Again, there is no sign of patristic or scholastic theology.

The discussion in the second part of this sermon, on the proof of the faith (*De probatione fidei*), is full of biblical citations and references, Ficino emphasizes here the importance of listening to the Gospel of Christ rather than attaching oneself to individual preachers, including himself.[93] Beside these verses of the Epistles to the Corintians, he also cites some verses of the Acts of the Apostles to the same effect and emphasizes in his conclusion that one needs to worship the crucified Christ alone, and not even his Apostles.[94] These are strong words: not only is no Doctor or Father of the Church mentioned in this context, but even the Apostles themselves draw whatever authority they have from being the servants of Christ and preaching his Gospel. They themselves say so in the various places Ficino has just quoted from Scripture.[95] One would have expected him now to state plainly that the

longius discedit ab illo, eo se perfectius habet." From the text quoted in the last note, it appears that the reference here is both to the intellect and the will. See the discussion of this issue with more references in chapter three, n. 22.

[93] *Ibid.*: "Hinc illud Pauli ad Corinthios: Non enim nosmetipsos praedicamus, sed Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum. Nos autem servos vestros per Iesum [II Cor 4, 5]. Item, inter vos alius dicit, ego quidem sum Pauli. Alius, ego ipsius Apollo [I Cor 1, 12]. Nonne carnales estis? Quid enim Apollo? Quid vero Paulus? nisi ministri eius cui credidistis. Et unicuique sicut Dominus dedit. Ego plantavi, Apollo rigavit, sed Deus incrementum dedit. Ita neque qui plantat est aliquid, neque qui rigat, sed qui incrementum dat Deus. Qui autem plantat, et qui rigat unum sunt [*ibid.*, 3, 3–8]. Nemo igitur in hominibus glorietur, omnia enim vestra sunt, sive Paulus, sive Apollo, sive Cephas, sive mundus, sive vita, sive mors, sive praesentia, sive futura, omnia vestra sunt vos autem Christi Christus autem Dei [*ibid.* 3, 21–23]."

[94] Acts 10, 25–26: "et factum est cum introisset Petrus obvius ei Cornelius et procidens ad pedes adoravit; Petrus vero levavit eum dicens surge et ego ipse homo sum;" Acts 14, 10–15, especially 13–14: "quod ubi audierunt apostoli Barnabas et Paulus conscissis tunicis suis exilierunt in turbas clamantes et dicentes viri quid haec facitis et nos mortales sumus similes vobis;" Apc 19, 10: "et cecidi ante pedes eius ut adorarem eum et dicit mihi vide ne feceris conservus tuus sum et fratrum tuorum habentium testimonium Iesu Deum adora testimonium enim Iesu est spiritus prophetiae."

[95] Ficino, *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, p. 476: "Ideo in Actis Apostolorum cum quidam Cornelius adorare Petrum voluisset, prohibitus est a Petro. Praeterea cum Licaonienses propter miracula Paulo et Barnabae tanquam Diis immolare vellent, ab eis permissi non sunt, Ioannes quoque in Apocalypsi adorari se vetuit. Sed quid nam hoc Pauli manifestius? Absit ut gloriemur in alio quam in cruce Domini nostri Iesu Christi, per quam mihi mundus crucifixus est, et ego mundo."

word of the Apostles is true because it is part of unerring Scripture. Instead, he says:

> The testimony of the Apostles is supremely powerful, since they never wavered in their faith.[96]

His formulation here is interesting: the testimony of the Apostles derives its validity not from being a part of unerring Scripture, but rather from the fact that they never wavered in their faith. This unexpected formulation seems to me to be a clear hint that other testimonies are based on less solid and firm support. What could this refer to except patristic and scholastic theology? This is, I believe, an implied critique of theological discussions which are not focused on the Scriptures, but rather on the opinions of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, as in the scholastic theology.[97]

In the next section of the sermon Ficino highlights another essential difference between man and beast:

> We see that beasts have a judgment determined by nature. Indeed, the sheep determines by natural valuation that the wolf is dangerous to it and runs away. Nor can it not run away since nature impels it to do so. By natural impulse the swallows [are impelled] to make a nest, bees to make a beehive, spiders to make webs. Therefore, all animals of the same kind always make their own unique things in the same way. They never learn nor do things differently, since the natural species by which [these animals] are led exists in them from the beginning and remains the same. But human beings both learn and always alter their actions, even though they have one nature from the beginning. Indeed, they

[96] *Ibid.*, p. 477: "Denique testimonium Apostolorum summopere validum est, ex eo quod in fide minime titubabant."

[97] It is important to notice the change in the second period of the history of Thomism (1400–1550) in which there was a "tendency to adopt the *Summa Theologiae* instead of the *Sentences* as the basic text in theology". See Kristeller, *Medieval Aspects of Renaissance Learning*, ed. and trans. Edward P. Mahoney (Durham, North Carolina 1974), p. 40. Earlier, in the thirteenth century, in the Faculty of Theology in Paris there were both a *cursor Sententiarum* and a *cursor biblicus*, while in the Dominican *studium generale* there were always only *cursores Sententiarum* "and, hence, no cycle of cursory lectures on the Bible." On the other hand, in the fourteenth century, we find in the Dominican *studium generale* lectures on Aristotle's *Ethics* and Thomas Aquinas. See M. Michèle Mulchahey, 'The Dominican *Studium* System and the Universities of Europe in the Thieteenth Century', in Jacqueline Hamesse [ed.], *Manuels, programmes de cours et techniques d'enseignement dans les universités médiévales* (Louvain 1994), pp. 277–324; see especially pp. 308–309, 311–312. See also M. Michèle Mulchahey's *First the Bow is Bent in Study: Dominican Education Before 1350* (Toronto 1998), pp. 75–399.

> are not drawn into action but rather they themselves lead themselves differently at different times by their own choice.[98]

Ficino's source may be mediaeval, but the distinction between instinct in animals and active reasoning in man is well attested in Stoic sources.[99] This passage might be an important source for Pico's famous words at the beginning of his oration, which was composed a few years later.[100]

This conclusion seems original and based on Ficino's own observation of nature, but this is because Ficino does not cite any author to confirm it. So far he has been using ideas which have been around for some time. Now he extends this old philosophical distinction in order to make a theological point. While the elements, the trees, and the beasts never deviate in their movments, choices, and occupations, man often does so.[101] This is not because all these things have a more perfect intellect than man—they have no intellect at all. It is because

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[98] Ficino, *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, pp. 477–478: "Bruta videmus iudicium habere natura determinatum. Naturali enim extimatione iudicat ovis lupum sibi pernitiosum atque fugit. Neque potest non fugere impellente natura. Naturali instinctu hirundines ad nidum conficiendum, apes ad aluearia, ad telas araneae. Ideo omnes eiusdem speciei animantes, eodem modo sua fabricant semper. Neque discunt aliquando, neque variant unquam. Quia species naturalis qua ducuntur, ab initio inest, atque eadem permanet. Homines autem et discunt, et sua opera variant semper. Unam tamen et ab initio naturam habent. Non igitur natura trahuntur ad agendum, sed ipsi consilio suo alias aliter seipsos agunt."

[99] The general idea may well be taken from Seneca, *Ep.* 121. The word *iudicium*, referring to natural instinct, appears in §9. Expressions like *naturalis motus* (§7), *naturalis status* (§8), *natura intellegitur* (§11), and the like appear throughout the letter. The examples of the bees and the spider appear in §§22–23. Other examples here are not attesded in this particular epistle, but may be taken from similar Latin texts. It is also possible that Ficino may have used Avicenna's *De anima*: see Dag Hasse, *Avicenna's De anima in the West* (London and Turin 2000), *ad indicem* s.v. 'sheep and wolf'.

[100] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus*… pp. 104–106: "Nec certam sedem, nec propriam faciem, nec munus ullum peculiare tibi dedimus, o Adam, ut quam sedem, quam faciem, quae munera tute optaveris, ea, pro voto, pro tua sententia, habeas et possideas. Definita ceteris natura intra praescriptas a nobis leges coercetur. Tu, nullis angustiis coercitus, pro tuo arbitrio, in cuius manu te posui, tibi illam praefinies. Medium te mundi posui, ut circumspiceres inde commodius quicquid est in mundo. Nec te caelestem neque terrenum, neque mortalem neque immortalem fecimus, ut tui ipsius quasi arbitrarius honorariusque plastes et fictor, in quam malueris tute formam effingas. Poteris in inferiora quae sunt bruta degenerare; poteris in superiora quae sunt divina ex tui animi sententia regenerari." A critical historiographical discussion of this theme in Pico, including most of the bibliography, can be found in Craven, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola*… pp. 21–45.

[101] Ficino, *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, p. 478: "Unde nam contingere id putamus? Quia elementa, arbores, bestiae, in suis quibusdam motibus, electionibus, artibus nunquam

all these things are drawn by the divine intellect and its instrument, nature, which never deviates or errs, while man is led by his own intellect, which can deviate and err.[102] I think Ficino is deliberately using here the double meaning of the verb *errare*: to deviate but also to err. Beings without intellect cannot err since they are completely subjected to unerring nature. Man, however, is subjected to his own intellect, and the human intellect can, of course, err. The weakness and imperfection of the human intellect is therefore not only the reason for the unique status of man in nature, but it is also what connects man to religion and to religious morality. When man by his own actions spends his leisure in a suitable manner, he too is led towards God and does not deviate or err, as is clear from the prophecies and miracles. But if he were always to lead himself in the way that these things without intellect are led, then he would deviate or err less, since he would become a more perfect instrument.[103] And if these things conducted themselves like man, they would deviate or err more, inasmuch as they have obtained a less perfect species.[104] Ficino here presents two essential notions of his theology: prophecies and miracles, which should help in leading us towards God. This issue will be discussed in the next chapter. Here he also introduces an interesting conflict between *perfectius instrumentum* and *perfecta species*, on the one hand, which cannot deviate or err, and, on the other hand, free acts according to human intellect, which can either deviate/err or conduct itself in accordance with God. He makes a connection between necessity and the body, and between the liberty of choice and the soul. If our choice were to be imposed by some external necessity, we would always act according to the condition of our bodies and according to our imagination, which is moved by the senses, both of which attract us. This is the way in which all beasts act.[105] This is how

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aberrant. Homo vero saepissime." This is obviously another allusion to Seneca's *Ep.* 121.

[102] *Ibid.*: "Non quidem ex eo quod intellectus insit illis perfectior. Quibus nec intellectus quidem inest ullus, sed quoniam ab intellectu divino instrumentoque eius natura nunquam errante trahuntur, homo vero ab intellectu proprio, qui errare potest, ducitur."

[103] *Ibid.*: "Qui etiam si quando ab actionibus propriis ocium agit ad tempus, tunc ipse quoque Deo ducitur, neque errat. Quod ex vaticiniis et miraculis declarat. Ac si semper duceretur, sicut alia, tanto minus erraret, quam illa, quanto esset perfectius instrumentum."

[104] *Ibid.*: "Rursus si alia se ipsa ducerent, sicut homo, tanto magis errarent, quanto minus perfectam sortita sunt speciem."

[105] *Ibid.*: "Denique si electio nostra illata quadam necessitate ferteretur, nunquam

we act in the first instance; but then we consider the matter and choose to do things contrary to our natural instincts, since we prefer the liberty of the soul and its virtue, and also eternal happiness, to mortal things.[106] Liberty therefore means considering and choosing, that is, using our intellect and acting contrary to the stimuli of the body and the senses, because we prefer immortal to mortal things. Such a preference

> Mostly appears among philosophers and men of religion who choose a manner of life—either for the sake of discovering truth, or for the sake of obtaining divine grace—which is not only against the senses, but is also without doubt harmful to the body. Indeed in this, the human mind declares its free action and its control over the body and corporeal matters.[107]

Philosophy and religion, or philosophers and men of religion, are bound together in their mutual rejection of the body and of corporeal matters. This is a central point for Ficino in both philosophy and religion. One notices that this determined rejection derives not only from Christian sources but also from a new source: Plato and Neoplatonism, in which the rejection of corporeal matters is one of the central doctrines. Such a rejection expresses the unique liberty of man to use his intellect to choose this rejection, even though it goes against his senses and is disadvantageous to his body. This is, of course, a well-known *topos* in Christianity, expressed for instance, in John 20, 29: μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ πιστεύσαντες. But Ficino emphasizes that this liberty is possible only on account of the weakness and imperfection of the human intellect, which has the freedom either to err or to follow God. Therefore, the imperfect human intellect is the only thing in nature which has a connection to religion and to religious morality. Its imperfection, manifested in man's variable actions, is what enables man, in his weakness, to achieve perfection and eternal happiness through a free act of

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aliter ageremus, quam affectio corporis simul atque imaginatio praesens a sensibus mota nos allicit. Quemadmodum et bestiae faciunt omnes, et bestia nostra."

[106] *Ibid.*: "Contra vero saepe ita primum commoti, mox consultamus, eligimusque contra quam incitatio eiusmodi provocaverunt. Quoniam libertatem animi et virtutem eius aeternamque felicitatem rebus mortalibus anteponimus."

[107] *Ibid.*: "Quod quidem maxime apparet in Philosophis atque religiosis, qui vel veritatis inveniendae, vel divinae gratiae ineundae, gratia institutionem vitae eligunt, non solum sensibus repugnantem, sed etiam corpori proculdubio noxiam. Qua quidem in re mens humana liberam actionem imperiumque in corpus corporeaque declarat." It is clear here that both philosophers and men of religion choose their way of life out of their own free will, not by the grace of God. The grace of God is indeed what the *religiosi* aim at in their own choice of the religious way of life.

choosing. From this follows the freedom of man's basic choices in this world, which is another significant aspect of humanist theology.

Prophecies and miracles have a special place in Ficino's humanist theology. He refers to the Scriptures and also to Origen in order to confirm the importance of those who heard *viva voce* the mysteries, that is, those who can give first-hand testimony of a revelation, and to criticize those who rashly believe in them without such testimony.[108] Here Ficino refers to those who testified regarding Christ's mysteries mainly after the age of the Apostles.[109] If they were not *doctissimi* from the beginning, then they became so soon afterwards; and he calls some of them supreme philosophers and others simply philosophers. Yet these learned philosophers were not the first founders of Christianity. Divine providence saw to it that the Apostles and their immediate disciples were simple people teaching a simple truth. That in the next generations so many philosophers and scholars accepted this truth—this is a proof of the miraculous nature of Christian revelation; but it also shows—another idea central to Ficino's thought—that these philosophers came to realize that Christianity agrees with natural religion, but also that it adds to it some truths which cannot be grasped by philosophy alone.[110] What is important is that this history stops with Clement

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[108] *Ibid.*: "Hinc Paulus et Apollo ubique cum doctis de Christi mysteriis disserentes Prophetarum volumina in medium adducebant. Iubet saepe Paulus discipulos suos, praecipue sacerdotes, profundae Prophetarum intelligentiae diligenter incumbere. Origenes contra Celsum inquit, Paulus criminatur eos, qui temere credunt. Profecto Christianis consuetudo est, pro eorum indubitata sententia trahere audientes, haec ille."

[109] *Ibid.*: "Ac si non omnes ab initio, tamen paulo post doctissimi, quod quidem eorum gesta scriptaque confirmant. Et hi quidem deinceps quam plurimi, Ioannes, Paulus Hierotheusque Dionysius Philosophi summi, Iustinus, Pantenus, Quadratus, Agrippa, Aristides, Lucasque, Marcusque Philosophi. Item Thomas et Apolio legis Iudaicae peritissimi. Timotheus, Titus, Clemens Romanus, Barnabas, Ioannes senior, Egesippus, Papias, Mellitus Philosophus Asianus, Ignatius sapiens, Policarpus insignis doctor Asiae, Dionysius Alexandrinus, aliique permulti sapientia excellentes. Quos in libro de Religione longo ordine numeramus." A longer list of names is given in *De Christiana religione*, and I shall discuss it in the following chapter.

[110] *Ibid.*: "Inter innumerabiles Originem tacere non possum Philosophum, Martyremque praeclarum. Denique si primum religionis huius fundamentum Dialectici, vel Oratores, vel Poetae iecissent, suspicaremur plebem astutia, et eloquentia fuisse deceptam. Si docti omnes semper respuissent, iudicaremus eam forsitan contemnendam. Si principes vel ab initio, vel paulo post huic legi omnino favissent, opinaremur debiliores a potentioribus fuisse coactos. Successores deinde, ut fit, legem illam cum lacte suxisse. Divina igitur providentia voluit religionis suae simplicem veritatem ab hominibus prima rudibus, simplicibus, paucis, primam originem ducere, atque ab eis astutos, doctos, plurimos quasi pisces a piscatoribus feliciter et mirabiliter irretiri. Permisit insuper Religionem suam annos plures, quam trecentos a potentibus ubique Gentium crudeliter

and Origen, and does not include the Doctors, or even some of the late Fathers.

We have already observed the philosophical nature of Ficino's sermons. In the last part of this sermon he introduces another analogy between the intellect and religion. Following Proclus, to whom he refers, he describes in details the nature of the intellect and its relation with its objects.[111] Unlike the perception of the senses, the intellect penetrates into the intelligible by defining and distinguishing. What is proper to the intelligible is a universal and special reason of the thing which is known. Since this is free from place and time, the intellect is also free from place and time and therefore eternal.[112] What about religion? Here we have a number of stages. In the initial stage, there was natural religion which was based on human reasonings, but was often propagated by force or by inducements of pleasure, and the disposition of the stars.[113] Then came Christianity, which won the day, although it appeared to be contrary to both ordinary reason and pleasurs and was

impugnari. Quo maior foret doctorem testium et fidelium numerus, reique ipsius, verior, certior, firmior, authoritas. Nam in prosperitate quidem servare fidem facile est, in adversitate vero difficile." Notice the special status of Origen.

[111] *Ibid.*, p. 479: "Intellectus rem vera ratione intellectam attingit intelligendo. Cum igitur rationibus certis substantiam individuam comprehendit, suo quodam indivisibili tangit rem indivisibilem et intelligit. Alioquin dividuum tangeret non individuum. Hoc ipsum intellectu indivisibili ad intelligendum sufficiens solum quidem ipsum, ipse intellectus existit. Cum igitur intellectualis substantia sit penitus individua, dissolvi nunquam potest. Praesertim quia substantia haec intellectualis non solum impartibilis est, sed etiam in se ipsa subsistens, videlicet a corpore non dependens. Alioquin in se ipsam reflecti non posset. Quemadmodum in Theologia nostra [Ficino, *Theologia platonica* I, 3] Proculi ratione [Proclus, *Theologia platonica* V, 30] probamus"; "Oportet praeterea inter naturam cognoscentem, atque cognitam esse proportionem, ut inter visum atque lumen, inter auditum atque sonum. Multo magis inter intellectum et intelligibile proprium."

[112] *Ibid.*: "Intellectus enim intelligibile penetrat definiendo atque distinguendo. Quod sensus circa sensibile nunquam efficit. Intelligibili vero proprium est, universalis ipsa specialisque rei cognitae ratio. Cum igitur haec a loco temporeque sit absoluta, merito intellectus ab eisdem solutus est atque sempiternus." Much of this is known to us from the chapters on νοῦς in book III of *De anima*. We know from Marinus' *Vita Procli* XII that Proclus studied *De anima*, as a preparation for *Phaedo*, in a private seminar with Damascius. But it is significant that Ficino, who must have been familiar with Aristotle, prefers to ascribe these ideas not to him, but to the newly discovered Proclus.

[113] *Ibid.*: "Leges humanae non aliter aut admittuntur ab initio, aut postquam admissae sunt propagantur, quam vel consuetis, communibusque humanarum, et naturalium rationum suasionibus, vel authoritate quadam imperatoria, impetuve armorum vel facilitate et commoditate vivendi, atque illecebris voluptatum. Praeterea siderum dispositio, non aliis unquam instrumentis, quam eiusmodi leges inter homines potest inducere."

persecuted by rulers.[114] This implies that Christianity is superhuman, superceletial, and completely divine.[115] In this respect, Christian law is different from, and superior to, all human laws and to human intellect. The rest of this sermon consists of issues which will be discussed in the next chapter.[116]

In the next sermon, on Christ's miracle of the five loaves, Ficino discusses the four ways (*modi*) in which such a thing could have happened: *creatio, rarefactio, generatio*, and *magnitudinis attractio*.[117] This discussion seems very similar to many scholastic discussions of this theme; but by the end of the sermon we find an interesting admixture of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic physics with elements of Christian cosmology brought in.[118] The soul can be more spiritual when it is related to the intellect, or more corporeal when it is related to the body and the senses; and through the soul even the body can become more spiritual.[119] This description of the soul is interesting in at least two points:

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[114] *Ibid.*: "Quamobrem cum Christianam legem cognoverim apud homines sanae mentis, et ortam aliquando et cito latissime propagatam, dum probabiles illi multorum argumentationes adversarentur, dum arma potentum contra illam ubique saevirent, dum palam omnis humanae voluptatis usus spesque ab ea prorsus auferretur."

[115] *Ibid.*: "Legem eiusmodi neque humanam esse, neque a coelesti fato pendere, sed divinam omnino, et supercoelesti quadam potentia proficisci necessario concludemus."

[116] *Ibid.*: "Quid? Quod multis ante seculis longo ordine a plurimis Prophetis atque Sybillis singula haec praedicta fuerunt, quod in sequentibus ostendemus. Quid? Quod Christus, vitae magister, mortem suam, persequutionem adversum discipulos suos ubique futuram, propagationem immutabilitatem religionis suae, miserabilem Iudaeorum ruinam brevi venturam. Gentilium conversionem, Iudaeorum quorundam pertinaciam usque ad mundi finem duraturam, tum ipse praedixit, tum discipulos suos inspiravit, ut dicerent"; *ibid.*: "Denique si religionis maxime propria puritas est, haec certe divinissima est, quae neque viles posteriorum Iudaeorum superstitiones, et spurcissima Talmut deliramenta, neque obscoenas et iniquas Gentilium fabulas, neque abominabilem Mahumethensium licentiam et Alchorani ineptias admittit. Quae neque terrena praemia, ut leges aliae, sed coelestia pollicetur." All these themes are fully treated in *De Christiana religione.*

[117] *Ibid.*: "Ex quinque panibus et duobus piscibus satiavit quinque virorum millia. Quaeritur quomodo panis ille acceperit incrementum. Quatuor id modis effici potuit. Creatione, Rarefactione, Generatione, Magnitudinis attractione, alienae materiae non creavit novam ibi materiam."

[118] *Ibid.*, p. 480: "Ponimus corpus corpulentum, corpus spiritale, et spiritum. In primo genere sunt, Terra, Aqua, Aer mixtus. In secundo autem sunt, Aer purus, Ignis, Coelum. In tertio Anima, Angelus, Deus. Deus quidem et Angelus simpliciter spiritales sunt."

[119] *Ibid.*: "Anima vero spiritalis quidem est, quatenus intellectu agit. Dicitur etiam animalis, exercet opera vitae, sensusque in corpore. Dicitur et corporalis, quando intellectu nihil agente agit, quod est animae reliquum. Sic enim affectum et habitum induitur corporalem. Ubi anima ad conditiones corporis traditur, id est, ut fiat

first, the analogy between the status of the soul in man and man's status in the cosmos; second, the soul, although it is one substance, has two aspects: spiritual and corporeal. This is true not only of the soul and the body, but also of all the elements in the cosmos, claims Ficino.[120] A sermon which started with a traditional scholastic question has thus ended on a strong Neoplatonic and possibly Stoic note, exemplifying the difference between scholastic and humanist theology.

In another sermon, on the two disciples in Emmaeus, from Luke 24, 13–53 (and parallels), Ficino uses the words of Augustine in his interpretation,[121] but he ends the sermon with some clear Neoplatonic analogies and images.[122] In the sermon, which concerns the sufferings of Paul, Ficino presents his explanation of the fact that there are many who still do not believe in the word of God. Beside being a common theme in such sermons, we should remember that the context of the spiritual crisis makes this theme more relevant. Ficino claims that although many sins are caused by the humours, *incredulitas* is not one of them, since it is caused instead by demons. Angels, on the other hand, strengthen our faith.[123] It is not possible to separate Ficino's theology from his philosophy, cosmology, and medicine. They are all bound together: humoral medicine, Neoplatonic cosmology and Christian theology. It is clear that the admixture of traditional questions and ideas taken from new

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passibilis, obscura, tarda, hebes. Potest itaque corpus quandoque ad naturam animae retrahi, ut fiat impassibile, clarum, agile, spiritale."

[120] *Ibid.*: "Tunc, inquam, cum animus totus intellectus evadit divino absorptus intellectu. Neque id mirum, vidimus enim terram rarefactione fieri aquam hanc similiter aerem effici, hunc fieri similiter ignem. Ignis, si materiam dempseris, erit coelum. Si coelo dimensionem subtraxeris, erit spiritus, id est, lumen a materia et dimensionibus absolutum. Sic vides corporale ad naturam ascendere spiritalem. Sicut cogitare potes spiritum effici corporalem. Addita lumini dimensione primum, deinde materia. Addito animae affectu et habitu corporali adhibita condensationi igni, aerique et aquae." This *spiritus* which is unlike matter, is to some extent, the Stoic πνεῦμα.

[121] *Ibid.*, p. 482: "Et has rationes elicimus ex quodam Augustini fundamento."

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 483: "Rursus sicut tres in Deo personae in una conveniunt Deitate, sic Sol, Mercurius, Venus semper proximi in communi quodam splendore conveniunt. Denique una in Sole substantia est sub figura, luce, calore, sicut una in tribus personis est divina natura."

[123] *Ibid.*, p. 484: "Audientes vero multi quidem, nullo modo suscipiunt hoc semen, hoc Dei verbum. Qui scilicet nullam rebus divinis fidem adhibent. Qui sunt via quaedam a Diabolo trita. Ubi nota incitamenta ad vitia ex humoribus facile provenire, ex cholera ad iram, atque superbiam. Ex sanguine ad vanitatem, atque libidinem, ex phlegmate ad pigritiam. Ex melancholia ad timiditatem, invidiam, avaritiam. Incredulitatem vero non facile ex humoribus provenire, sed ex daemonibus dissuadentibus aliquid, et aliud suadentibus. Nam et credulitatem augent nobis angeli."

textual *corpora* which we find in Ficino's texts is novel; but it is not always easy to distinguish clearly between the traditional questions and his new treatments and solutions based on these various disciplines. It is obvious that such a detailed discussion of humoral medicine was not a standard part of scholastic theology. It is also obvious that Ficino uses neither the scholastic thematic sermon nor the penitential style of the popular preachers, but rather a complex rhetoric, full of detailed and even technical discussions, together with analogies and images derived from many sources, some of which would have been completely new to most of his listeners. The Scriptures, on the one hand, and the Neoplatonic philosophers, on the other, are the main sources here, and the absence of both Fathers and Doctors of the Church is notable. He then discusses three other traditional failings in faith—*defectus caritatis*, *defectus fortitudinis*, and *defectus temperantiae*.[124] This is again a typical mixture between the main Christian virtue, *caritas*, and two Platonic virtues, *fortitudo* and *temperantia*. Ficino moves on to describe *Platonica quaedam opinio* concerning the three stages of some moral virtues: *civilis virtus*, *purgatoria virtus*, and *purgati animi virtus*.[125] In the description of those who produce civic virtue from the divine seed, we can see how Ficino, by using what he regards as a Platonic view, makes a connection between religious or theological virtues and civic or political virtues. The fact that civic virtue originates from the divine seed makes it impossible to separate religion from politics.

In another discussion in the same sermon, Ficino introduces his account of the relation between knowledge, opinion, and faith. While discussing the theme of Paul's ascent to the third heaven, Ficino comments on the Apostle's statement that he does not know whether his soul has been seized or is still in his body:[126]

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[124] *Ibid.*: "Alii vero suscipiunt semen aliqua fide, sed quia non veram charitatem habent, non perseverant: ideo non perducunt ad fructum, atque hi quidem duobus modis: aliqui enim fortitudinis defectu, id est, laborem et dolorem non tolerantes, recedunt a fructu verbi divini, et hi dicuntur timore cadere. Alii defectu temperantiae. Hi enim corporis voluptatibus obsequuti, sementem intellectualis verbi non proferunt, talesque sunt quam plurimi. Plures enim muscarum vino dulci suffocantur, quam austero."

[125] *Ibid.*: "Tangitur hic insuper Platonica quaedam opinio, ponens tres in qualibet morali virtute gradus. Alii enim ex divino semine civilem producunt virtutem, quae secundos amputat motus. Alii purgatoriam, quae motus secundos extirpat, alii purgati animi, quae primos amputat motus." The "Platonic" idea comes from Macrobius, *Commentarium in somnium Scipionis* I.8.

[126] *Ibid.*: "Dicit autem se nescire utrum animus suus in raptu esset in corpore, necne:

> Indeed, if we cannot comprehend this by knowledge, we should at least try to comprehend it to the best of our ability by opinion and faith.[127]

The distinction between knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and opinion (δόξα) is a commonplace in Plato's dialogues, of which Ficino was the translator and commentator. Ficino adds to them the Christian concept of faith as surpassing both. Since Paul's ascent is a matter of faith, we can have no knowledge of it; but surprisingly, Ficino does offer an opinion which may well be based on ancient and mediaeval medicine.[128] The rest of this sermon is devoted to this explanation and contains references to Hebrew philosophers, Dionysius the Areopagite and Thomas Aquinas.[129] In this discussion there is another interesting passage dealing with the middle stage between knowledge and ignorance, that is, having an opinion, and with the distinction between the corporeal and the spiritual body:

> Meanwhile Paul's soul in the manner of a plant vegetated in a solid body, while it still animated his spiritual body; and when [Paul's soul] reached with this [spiritual body] to the third heaven, freed from its various corporeal ministrations, it perceived the secrets of God. In this way, [the soul or mind or spirit] having reached the supreme heights, was neither strictly in a solid body, nor totally outside the body, since [the soul or mind or spirit] inhabited a spiritual body; and it must be admitted that the way this comes about is not known to mankind. But even though we do not know, we still have an opinion.[130]

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id est, nesciri a se in quantum homo, nesciri ab aliquo simpliciter homine." Compare with Ficino's *De raptu Pauli* in his *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, pp. 697–706.

[127] *Ibid.*: "Nos igitur si scientia id comprehendere non possimus, opinione saltem, ac fide pro viribus tentemus attingere."

[128] *Ibid.*, pp. 484–487. See e.g., pp. 484–485: "Quid ergo? Est inter animam corpusque solidum spiritus tenue corpus vapor, et subtili sanguine procreatus. Vigore talis, qualis odor aquae vitis aspectu, talis qualis reverberatio quaedam splendoris aestate super arenas, hoc in spiritu proprie habitat anima. Per hanc regit et tractabile corpus. Nam et quando spiritus retractus ad intima deserit extima, anima quoque deserit eadem, quando iterum dilatatur, adest illis simul et anima. Potuit igitur Deus eiusmodi spiritum usque ad coelum tertium dilatare." One notes that *opinio*, which in Plato's dialogues is below knowledge, is here used in a new sense as something which may help us approach an understanding of a mystery of faith. This is an example of a creative use of scientific and philosophical knowledge for the purposes of a new theology.

[129] *Ibid.*, p. 485: "Quam et nonnulli Philosophi, praesertim Iudaei"; "Est et alia quaedam apud Dionysium distributio angelorum"; "Seraphini, ut exponit beatus Thomas…" Thomas and Augustine are the only late Christian sources employed by Ficino, probably because of their unique status.

[130] *Ibid.*: "Igitur interim anima Pauli mor[t]e plantae vegetabat in corpore solido, dum spiritale corpus etiam animabat, tangensque cum eo coelum tertium, expedita a variis corporis ministeriis, Dei perspiciebat arcana. Sic animus quatenus suprema

The entire human condition in relation to the boundaries of our knowledge is presented here in Ficino's interpretation of Paul's ascent. The corporeal state is one of complete ignorance, the spiritual state, by contrast, of complete knowledge. The soul can participate in both states, but it does not belong to either. By means of the spiritual body[131] the soul can rise upwards or descend downwards, which is the human condition of having opinions. The analogy between the soul as described here and the unique status of man in both Ficino and Pico, which was discussed above, is clear. But yet another analogy is of particular importance here: between the status of the soul and the status of having an opinion. Such an opinion can be true, but the soul cannot know this. The soul, like man, is bound by opinion. But this opinion can concern the most profound mysteries of God or the nature of the lowly corporeal world. But what about salvation? Ficino emphasizes Paul's special status as *beatus*, which enabled him, but no one else, to gain an understanding of such mysteries. When he returned from the highest heavens, however, he was not able to tell anyone, since men cannot understand things which are far beyond their intellect. It is not a speculative question about knowing something, but rather a practical question regarding the necessary condition (ἕξις) of being worthy of ascent. Ficino encourages his listeners to pray to God in order to move closer to this condition.[132] Ficino's description of Paul's ascent echoes Neoplatonic premises, terms, and cosmology—a model for man's ascent or his salvation.

In the beginning of the next sermon, on the suffering of Christ, we find a critical attitude towards the Christian 'nation' of Ficino's day:

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tangebat, nec erat proprie in corpore solido, nec extra corpus omnino. Quoniam habitabat in corpore spiritali, et hoc qua ratione fiat, nesciri fatetur ab homine. Nos autem etsi nescimus, at tamen opinamur."

[131] See, ICor 15, 44: "σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν. Εἰ ἔστιν σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἔστιν καὶ πνευματικόν."

[132] Ficino, *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, p. 486: "Quorum sane arcanorum cognitio non potest ab homine percipi, nisi beato. Ideo Paulo non licuit haec hominibus eloqui. Nam minime percepissent. Nihil prodest nobis, o fratres, scire duntaxat, Paulum altissima conscendisse, et illuc subinde secum discipulos adduxisse, nisi et ipsi tales nos Paulo praebeamus, possit nos quoque ad excelsa provehere. Ponderosa non possunt ad altissima provehi. Deponamus itaque fratres omnia terrenorum pondera vitiorum, purgati et leves accedamus ad Paulum, oremus Deum ut manum supplicibus piam porrigat." Compare Plotinus, VI 9, 11: "σοφὸς δὲ ἱερεὺς τὸ αἴνιγμα συνιεὶς ἀληθινὴν ἂν ποιοῖτο ἐκεῖ γενόμενος τοῦ ἀδύτου τὴν θέαν."

> Today, my brothers, the Christian nation is everywhere occupied with empty Bacchanalian celebrations. Christ meanwhile, the preserver of [this] nation, foretells to [His] disciples in the Gospel of Luke the pains of His future suffering, which He endured because of the sin of our Bacchanalian celebrations.[133]

This is a clear indication of the spiritual crisis. With the word *hodie* at the beginning Ficino emphasizes that he is talking about the present. He is criticizing his fellow Christians for their immoral manner of life and for their sins. Human blindness needs Christ's salvation in this life.[134] Ficino in this sermon is focusing on the will rather than the intellect: humanity is blind and only through the will of God—which he connects to two terms: *caritas* and *amor*—can it achieve salvation. This is confirmed by Hermes Trismegistus, Plato, and Christian theologians.[135] We see here, then, two characteristic features of Ficino's humanist theology: the concord between ancient and Christian theologians, and the significance of cosmic love. It is important to note that the terms *caritas*, the Latin word for ἀγάπη, and *amor*, the Latin word for ἔρως, are used by Ficino as synonyms. *Caritas*/ἀγάπη is the word used for divine love and admiration of God in the New Testament and in patristic and scholastic theology; but *amor*/ἔρως, the basic meaning of which is passion or desire, which received already its Christian formulation through Augustine and some of the monastic and scholastic theologians, seems to derive also from Plato's dialogues, especially the *Symposium* or *Phae-*

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[133] *Ibid.*, p. 487: "Hodie, fratres mei, Christianus populus vanis passim bacchanalibus occupatur, Christus interea servator populi, in Evangelio Lucae praenuntiat discipulis futurae passionis suae dolores. Quos bacchanalium nostrorum culpa sustinuit." *Hodie* may mean today simply because the sermon is preached today; but it may mean today more than ever before. The word *bacchanalia* may serve as some clue. Juvenal was widely read in the Middle Ages and later. Here is the begining of his third satire: "Ultra Sauromatas fugere hinc libet et glacialem / Oceanum, quotiens aliquid de moribus audent / qui Curios simulant et Bacchanalia vivunt." This satire is mainly about homosexuality, which was one of the most criticized social phenomena in Florence at the time; See Trexler, *Public Life*… pp. 379–380. But it could stand for the more general moral decline. It is possible that Ficino intentionally refers to *vana bacchanalia*, since Proclus regards some mystical activities as true bacchanals.

[134] *Ibid.*: "In caeco mendicante in via, nota humanam caecitatem in hac vita salutis egenam."

[135] *Ibid.*, p. 488: "Nam et ipse Deus charitate sui, id est, amplificandae, sive communicandae suae bonitatis amore, ut Dionysius ait [*De divinis nominibus* X, Migne PG 3, p. 708A–B], omnia procreavit. Amor autem in voluntate consistit. Ideo Mercurius atque Plato una cum nostris Theologis, voluntatem divinam ex amore bonitatis suae cuncta procreavisse confirmant." *Nostri theologi* probably means no more than some more recent Christian theologians.

drus, and from Neoplatonic philosophy. So, Ficino brings in here his famous and influential philosophy of love.[136] Love is the cosmic power originating from God and stimulating all things towards divine imitation and divine law;[137] and we advance much faster by means of love than by means of understanding.[138]

As in the discussion in which Ficino combines traditional medicine, originating in mediaeval technical manuals, with speculative theology, here, too, we have a combination of the penitential style of exhortation to divine love and Neoplatonic cosmology. In his sermons Ficino draws on different kinds of traditional knowledge (medicine, astronomy, astrology, theology), on the one hand, and new textual *corpora*, on the other, using all these pieces of information to interpret various themes from the Scriptures. The result, I suggest, is a new humanist theology.

In the next sermon, on the star of the Magi, we find the ideal of Ficino's humanist theology, the ruler-priest, which is much discussed in his *De Christiana religione* and therefore belongs to the next chapter. Ficino deals here with the star which announced the birth of Christ, mentioned both in Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 24, 17, and by the Magi in Matthew 2, 9–10.[139] The Magi are presented as priests, very

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[136] *Ibid.*: "Quum igitur ex amore divino facta sint omnia, eodem omnia conservantur, atque moventur. Singula igitur inde ducta amore quodam propagationis suae, qua divinam imitentur propagationem, moventur et agunt. Amorem item conservationis suae, qua divinam imitentur aeternitatem prosequuntur, et fugiunt. Quae sine amore, nec aliquid agerent, nec agendo consequerentur. Amore item partium mutuo servatur totum, conservantur et partes. Amore tandem omnium inter se communi universum perpetuo conservatur, omnisque huiusmodi amor charitas nominatur." The ideas are partly taken from Plato's *Symposium*, with the Christian creator God thrown in. Until the last sentence of this passage *amor*, without qualification, is the cosmic force. Only in the last sentence do we have a special kind of *amor*, the love among people, and only this is *caritas*. For the Christian context see Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (New York 1969).

[137] *Ibid.*: "Quando [amor] a Deo insitus ad divinam imitationem et legem omnia provocat."

[138] *Ibid.*: "Sola tandem charitate Deum consequi possumus. Quum enim ille sit immensus, non possumus illum apprehendere, nisi nobis ille dederit. Non dat ille seipsum, nisi animo charitate danti. Ideo per viam intelligendi nimium tempore longo proficimus. Per viam amandi brevissimo plurimum"; *ibid.*, p. 489: "Sic et animus non per externam notitiae lucem, sed per amorem in Deum, fit Deus, et intrinsecus inde lucet ut Deus." Notice that by means of *caritas* you can only reach God (*Deum consequi*) or proceed towards him; while by means of *amor* one becomes God (*fit Deus*), having identified with the cosmic force. This is another example of connecting Platonic ἔρως with Pauline ἀγάπη, with the former having priority.

[139] *Ibid.*, p. 489: "Orietur stella ex Iacob, et consurget virga ex Israel. Per haec verba Balaam in libro Numerorum praedicit Messiam nasciturum. Quando stella quaedam

skilled in astronomy, who also were rulers of their nations. Ficino moves on to a more detailed discussion of astrology, focusing on comets and mentioning, for example, the Stoic philosopher and priest of the first century AD, Chaeremon, about whom he knows from Origen.[140] The rest of the sermon relates *variae historiae de stellis* and discusses both the astronomical and astrological opinions and doctrines of different authors and sources, including Chalcidius, Suetonius, Maimonides, and Albumasar, in the context of foretelling Christ's birth—combining all these opinions with the Scriptures.[141]

In the sermon on the song of Simeon, which concerns the true peace of believers, Ficino claims that everywhere in the cosmos we can find disharmony rather than harmony, and that the only source of peace and harmony in the universe is God.[142] Here classical sources are not cited, and much of the details are taken from the physics, astronomy, and medicine of the time.

As a final specimen, let us look at what is officially a sermon on Colossians 3. The theme of the sermon is ascending towards Christ,

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miris modis oriatur circa Iudaeam. Habitat autem Balaam in Orientali plaga versus Hierusalem, in qua erant Magi, inter quos peritissimi Astronomiae Sacerdotes erant, qui et regebant populum."

[140] *Ibid.*: "Demum nascente Christo, miranda quadam in altis Cometa refulsit. Quod autem fuerit a doctis iudicatus Cometa, testatur Origenes contra Celsum [I, 59], dicens, se legisse in libro Cheremonis Stoici de Cometis quandoque ex ipsis prospera et salutaria significari." Origen is another exception to Ficino's habit of not referring to patristic and scholastic sources. See the next chapter.

[141] *Ibid.*, pp. 489–491. It is interesting that a Jewish and an Arab philosopher are cited, but no Doctor of the Church. For another discussion of this sermon see Stephen M. Buhler, 'Marsilio Ficino's *De stella magorum* and Renaissance Views of the Magi', in *Renaissance Quarterly* 43 (1990), pp. 348–371.

[142] *Ibid.*, p. 492: "Dicite rogo, fratres mei, quam pacem, quam concordiam invenire possitis in mundo, qui totus est ex discordibus constitutus. In corpore nostro adversus humores continue humores pugnant. Rationi repugnat sensus, et in ratione opiniones opinionibus contradicunt. Nunquid inveniemus extra nos pacem in rebus infra Lunam insuper inter se convenire discordantibus. Repugnant frigida calidis, sicca humidis, gravia levibus, rara densis, mollia duris, albis nigra, amara denique dulcibus. Quaeramus saltem in coelo pacem, atque concordiam, quam infra coelum reperire non possumus. Verum nec in coelesti quidem corpore, proh dolor, concordiam et pacem possumus invenire. Nam et illuc Astronomi repugnantiam multiplicem invenerunt. Contraria enim illic esse tradunt, signa signis, et planetas repugnare planetis, et oppositos inter se coelorum peragi motus. Merito igitur pacis author ait, pacem nobis dari, non a coelis quidem, sed a Patre omnium, qui imperat coelis: a Patre, inquam, per Filium, exhortante Spiritu, qui appellatur Spiritus pacis et charitatis, etiam Apostolus ait: Spes non confunditur, quia charitas Dei accensa est in cordibus nostris, per Spiritum sanctum, qui datus est nobis [Rom 5,5]."

and this indeed is the beginning of Col 3 (1–2). But then Ficino refers to the theme of all faithful constituting one body, which is taken fron Rom 12, 5. But there we have *unum corpus sumus in Christo*. Ficino continues: *cuius caput est Christus*, which is taken from I Cor 11, 3. But there Christ is not the head of the Church but of every man. This is already a creative amalgamation of verses. 'Worse' is to come. This image of the head is now explained according to a passage of Plato's *Timaeus*. To this Ficino adds a summary of some views of Galen as to the senses, imagination, reason, and the Stoic *principatum* (ἡγεμονικόν), which all reside in the head, and receive from it the three characteristics of the living organism, life, sense perception, and movement. Thus if we want to be members of the body of Christ and obtain from him as our head these qualities, we need to be connected to him through *fides, spes, caritas*—the three Christian virtues mentioned in the famous passage I Cor 12, 12–13.[143] Other references in this sermon are to the *Platonici* and to Plotinus, and the main theme is once again the relation between material and spiritual nature.[144] This mixture of New Testament verses, basic concepts from ancient philosophy, Plato, Galen, and the Neoplatonists, is typical of Ficino's new manner of doing theology.

[143] *Ibid.*, pp. 480–481: "Fratres si consurrexistis cum Christo etc. congregatio fidelium secundum Paulum unum corpus est. Cuius caput est Christus. Caput secundum Platonem est totus homo. Rotundum enim est instar coeli. Septem meatus habet, quasi planetas septem, oculos duos, quasi Solem et Lunam. Omnes sensus, qui non sunt in reliquo [Plato, *Timaeus*, 44d3–45a2]. Habet septem potentias cognoscendi, quinque sensus, imaginationem et rationem, et secundum Galenum principatum tenet in corpore [Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, 3,8,3 ff.], et ab eo derivatur in corpus animalis, vita, sensus et motus. Huic reliqua famulantur, ut hominis instrumenta. Itaque fratres, si Christus caput nostrum est in coelo [probably a combination of I Cor 11,3 and Col 1,18], nos membra, quatenus in terra sumus, tanquam membra seiuncta [combination of Col 3, 5 and I Cor 12,12], motum, sensum, vitam amittimus [philosophical concepts not in New Testament; in both Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy movement and sense perception are unique to the soul], nisi quatenus fide, spe, charitate ad ipsum, quasi tribus nervis alligati, manemus [I Cor 13, 13; but *caritas* is also mentioned in Col 3, 14, which may provide the association]. Quaeramus igitur superius ascendendo arctius alligati Christo, qui sursum est, ne penitus pereamus [Col 3, 1–4]. Sapiamus et gustemus, quae sursum sunt."

[144] *Ibid.*, p. 481: "Tradunt Platonici animam esse corporis seminarium. Ideoque formam corporis esse quasi animam quandam degenerantem in naturam materialem. Ideo probabile est vicissim naturam corporalem redigi quandoque ad animae ipsius naturam"; "Plotinus [II, 7, 2] probat corpus solidum non posse absque fractione solidum aliud penetrare, non quidem culpa materiarum, quae cum prima sui natura indivisibiles sint, facile possunt simul congredi."

3. *Poliziano's Sermons*

We have a number of sermons in the vernacular written by Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494), which were destined to be delivered by youths in the religious confraternities.[145] These sermons are not dated, but they must have been delivered some time during the period which concerns us in this chapter. Most of these sermons deal with common themes: *Del sacramento dell'Eucarista*, *Della passione di Gesù Cristo*, *Della umiltà di Gesù Cristo*. Most of what we find here are commonplaces in such sermons. The only thing which is of interest in this context is to be found near the beginning of the first sermon. The structure of the sermon, stated by Poliziano himself, is far from the standard scholastic thematic sermon.[146] After appealing to God and quoting Jeremiah 1, 6 and 9,[147] Poliziano says that he is relying on the overflowing grace of God.[148] He is comparing himself to the prophet Jeremiah, who was afraid to speak until God promised to put his words in his mouth. From now on Poliziano quotes regularly from the Scriptures, but only once from the Fathers of the Church, referring to Augustine's definition of a sacrament.[149] He mentions the pope and martyr of the Church Clement I once,[150] but never any Doctors of the Church, nor does he speak of demonstration or use technical scholastic terms.[151] All the rest of what we find in these sermons is of no interest in our context.

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[145] Angelo Ambrogini Poliziano, *Prose volgari inedite e poesie latine e greche edite e inedite*, ed. Isidoro del Lungo (Firenze 1867), pp. 3–16. It seems that these three sermons (and another sermon in Latin) were written by Poliziano in 1491 for recitation by youths in a confraternity. Eisenbichler suggested that they were written for the Medici or Giuliano di Lorenzo de' Medici, for recitation in the confraternity of San Giovanni Vangelista. See Eisenbichler, *The Boys*… p. 180, and n. 3, p. 391.

[146] *Ibid.*: "tratterò brievemente prima del Sacramento proprio, dipoi della sua fruttificazione, e finalmente della nostra preparazione a quello."

[147] *Ibid.*: "Per la qual cosa al sommo Idio ricorro colle parole dello fanciullo Ieremia: *Ah, ah! Domine Deus, ecce, nescio loqui quia puer sum.* E lui per sua misericordia forse degnerà rispondere: *Ecce, dedi verba in ore tuo.*"

[148] *Ibid.*: "Rifidandomi adonque nella sua esuberante grazia…"

[149] *Ibid.*: "Altro non è Sacramento, secondo Augustino [*Quaestiones in Pentateuch* Lib. III, q. 84], che una visibile forma d'invisibile grazia, nè altro *Eucaristia* è interpretata se non *buona grazia*; onde lei sola per la sua eccellenza si denomina proprio Sacramento." One notices again that the one Father quoted is Augustine. This definition (with a reference to Augustine's *De civitate Dei* X, 5), is cited in Peter Lombard's *Sententiae*, IV, dist. 1, cap. 2 (*Quid sit Sacramentum*). Poliziano must have been aware of such a definition in such a prominent place, but he quotes only Augustine.

[150] *Ibid.*, p. 10: "Perchè, come si legge nello Itinerario di Clemente…"

[151] Poliziano prefers to use instead relatively simple examples; *ibid.*, pp. 3–4: "Sotto la

4. *Rinuccini's Sermons*

I shall next examine the sermons of Alamanno Rinuccini (1426–1499), whose historical account we already encountered.[152] These sermons were delievered in the vernacular, most of them in the confraternity of the *Magi* between the early 1450s and the early 1490s. It is important to notice the changes and developments in these sermons over this long period.

In the early sermons there is still some reliance on patristic and scholastic theology. Rinuccini does not present detailed and technical theological discussions in his sermons, and he relies mostly on the Scriptures, although from time to time he cites some Fathers of the Church, mostly Augustine[153] and Chrysostom,[154] as well as one Doctor: Thomas Aquinas. Chrysostom was hardly known in the Middle Ages and making use of his discussion of the Eucharist is something of an innovation: he was recently made available in Latin. In citing Thomas, Rinuccini follows another important pattern in humanist theology: the effort by lay humanists to introduce, explain, translate, and disseminate abstract speculative theological discussions and themes in a more simple and common language for listeners who were not professional theologians:

> Indeed, the holy theologians [and] Doctors, especially St Thomas Aquinas in his *Secunda Secundae*, say that humility is a virtue which restrains our appetite, so that it does not raise itself higher than rectitude and the standards of reason allow; by combining this definition with the sayings of many other Doctors, which it would take too long to enumer-

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forma dunque di pane e vino ne ministra Iesù Cristo el suo Sacramento, acciò che, sì come di molti grani si fa un pane, di molti acini uno vino, così noi, per la comunione, quasi di molti membri un corpo diventiamo, tenendo una fede una speranza e una individua carità."

[152] Alamanno Rinuccini, *Lettere ed orazioni*, ed. Vito R. Giustiniani (Firenze 1953).

[153] *Ibid.*, p. 153: "… sappiendo Iesu che gli era venuta l hora che lui dovea passare di questo mondo al padre suo eterno (la quale passata, secondo sancto Augustino, in lingua hebraica e importata per questo nome *pasqua*)"; *ibid.*, p. 154: "Questo passo exponendo, sancto Augustino dice che…"

[154] *Ibid.*, p. 147: "Della qual cosa assegnando la ragione, il doctore greco Ioanni Crysostomo sopra lo evangelio di sancto Ioanni dice"; *ibid.*, p. 148: "La quale sententia conferma Crysostomo scrivendo sopra lo evangelio di Mattheo"; *ibid.*, p. 153: "… cioe, secondo Crysostomo, niuno segno…" For Chrysostom in the Renaissance context see Stinger, 'Italian Renaissance…' especially pp. 483–487, 496, 504–506.

> ate, we can say that humility is a diminution, a depression of our own will for the sake of the love of God and obedience to His holy commandments.[155]

After quoting Thomas' definition of humility, Rinuccini remarks that he could add to this definition a very long list of definitions by many other Doctors of the Church. He claims, however, that it would take too long to mention them all, so he gives his own definition instead. His definition is simple and clear, without abstract terms like *virtu, appetito, rectitudine et misura della ragione*, which appear in Thomas' definition. In any case even Thomas' definition, as well as other definitions or statements by theologians cited from time to time by Rinuccini, are translated and interpreted, thus becoming more accessible to his audience.[156] There is a similar treatment of another Christian virtue: *caritas*. Rinuccini begins with his own definition and then quotes and interprets other definitions by Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, and Thomas.[157] But most of the ser-

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[155] *Ibid.*, p. 149: "Dicono adunque e sancti doctori theologi et spetialmente sancto Thommaso d Aquino nella sua *Secunda Secundae* [q. 161, a. 1], che humilita e una virtu che raffrena lo appetito nostro che non si levi in alto piu che si decti la rectitudine et misura della ragione [*ibid.*, a. 6]; la quale diffinitione agiugnendo con li decti di molti altri doctori, che lungo sarebbe ad enumerare, possiamo dire che humilita e uno abbassamento, una depressione della propria nostra volonta per amore di Dio et ubidientia delli suoi sancti comandamenti."

[156] *Ibid.*, p. 147: "Della qual cosa assegnando la ragione, il doctore greco Ioanni Crysostomo sopra lo evangelio di sancto Ioanni dice: *maiora posterius reservavit, ut discipulorum familiaritatem augeret et multam illis tribueret consolationem in rebus gravibus suscipiendis* [*In Joh. Hom.* 70, 1 (PG 59/381–382)]; el figliuolo di Dio, in dimostrare e segni et miracoli a discepoli suoi, riservo al da sezo le cose maggiori, per piu accrescere la familiarita loro et dare loro maggiore consolatione ad sopportare le cose gravi et moleste che per suo amore dovevano patire"; *ibid.*, p. 155: "Questo considerando Giovanni Crysostomo sopra questo passo dice: *proditoris pedes Dominus lavit, sacrilegi et furis, et sub proditionis tempus, cum se incurabiliter affectum videret, in mensa socium habuit; et tu superbia inflaris elato supercilio! Igitur alter alterius pedes lavemus, etiam servorum* [*In Joh. Hom.* 71, 1 (PG 59/385)]. Dice Crysostomo: el nostro Signore lavo e piedi del traditore, ladro et sacrilego Juda, et sotto il tempo del tradimento, benche conoscessi il suo peccato essere incurabile, nella mensa sua lo hebbe per compagno, et tu huomo ardisci di gonfiare per superbia et andare con la fronte et testa elevata! Dobbiamo adunque et noi lavare e piedi l uno del altro, etiamdio de servi nostri"; *ibid.*, p. 158: "Questo considerando il morale doctore Sancto Gregorio dice: *o inextimabilis dilectio caritatis! ut servum redimeres, filium tradidisti!* O inextimabile amore di carita tua, Idio eterno, el quale, per ricomperare el tuo servo, desti el proprio figliuolo!"

[157] *Ibid.*, p. 156: "… si puo dire che [la charita] sia uno amore gratuito, cioe procedente non da speranza di premio o di utilita alcuna, ma solo da buona volonta di colui che ama. Questa, secondo che scrive sancto Augustino nel libro *De Doctrina Christiana* [3, 10, 16] et nel libro intitolato *De Moribus Ecclesiae* [11, 19], e uno affecto et movimento d animo, el quale ci induce ad fruire et amare Idio per se, et il proximo per Idio.

mon is devoted to the praise of the virtue of charity, relying solely on the interpretation of the Scriptures and avoiding almost completely any discussion of the different views of patristic or scholastic theologians.[158]

If we want to see the change in Rinuccini's manner of doing theology between his early and his late sermons, we can turn to a sermon dated July 15, 1493, which was delivered in the *palazzo pubblico* in front of the citizens and magistrates of Florence.[159] It was thus delivered in a political context to a large public, and not just in front of members of a religious confraternity. Yet it still discusses and praises a virtue in the same unscholastic manner. This virtue is justice.[160] All virtues have both spiritual and religious aspects, on the one hand, and political aspects and implications, on the other. The spiritual and reli-

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Questo medesimo conferma sancto Hieronymo et sancto Thommaso d Aquino nella *Secunda Secundae* [q. 23, a. 8], che tutti convengono in questa sententia, che charita e una virtu per la quale si ama Idio et il proximo. Di quanta excellentia et perfectione sia questa virtu per molte ragioni pruovano et dimostrano e sacri doctori et maxime sancto Ambrosio, il quale dice quella esser forma di tutte le altre virtu."

[158] See, e.g., *ibid.*, p. 157: "Questo e quello e quello che intese il glorioso apostolo Paulo nella Epistola ad li Corinthii [ICor 13,1], quando dixe: *si linguis hominum loquar et angelorum, charitatem autem non habeam, factus sum velut aes sonans aut cymbalum tinniens*; se io parlassi con le lingue delli huomini et delli angeli et io non habbia in me charita, io sono simile ad uno vaso di rame voto o uno cembalo risonante. Et per lungo processo enumerando tutte le virtu che dagli huomini si possono acquistare et tutti li doni et gratie che da Dio si possono ricevere, conchiude che, se elle non sono congiuncte con la charita, tutte essere di niuno pregio et nulla giovare ad chi le possiede. Et pero delle laude di tal virtu parlando, esso glorioso apostolo dice [ICor 13, 4]: *charitas patiens est, benigna est, charitas non aemulatur, non agit perperam, non inflatur*, etc.; la charita e patiente, e benigna, non arde per invidia, non gonfia per superbia, non fa male ad persona etc. Et finalmente enumerando le altre due virtu theologiche dice [ICor 13, 13]: *nunc autem manent spes, fides et charitas tria haec, maior autem horum est charitas*; hora in questa presente vita si ritruovano essere queste tre virtu, fede, speranza et charita, ma di tutte maggiore e la charita"; *ibid.*, p. 158: "Innumerabili altre excellentie et perfectioni di questa virtu, per fuggire la lungheza del mio parlare, lasciando indrieto, ci resta con brieve discorso vedere come et quanto ella sia stata nel nostro Signore Idio verso la humana generatione, che veramente si dimostra esser suta molto grande, imo excessivamente fuori d ogni misura, si come scrive il dilecto discepolo Giovanni Evangelista [Jn 3, 16]: *sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut filium suum unigenitum daret, ut omnis qui credit in ipsum non pereat, sed habeat vitam aeternam*; in tal modo et si grandemente Idio ha amato il mondo, che egli ha dato il suo figliuolo unigenito, a ccio chi crede in lui non perisca, ma habbia vita eterna."

[159] *Ibid.*, pp. 199–207.

[160] *Ibid.*, p. 199: "Quando io considero la excellentia, dignita et magnitudine della materia che s a a tractare, quando io penso la amplitudine et immensita della iustitia, della observatione della quale, per comandamento ad noi facto, dobbiamo parlare, magnifici et excelsi signori, dignissimo pretore, ornatissimi magistrati, et voi altri preclarissimi cittadini…"

gious aspects were at the centre of the previous sermons. The political aspects and implications are at the centre of this sermon, together with some new influences derived from the Florentine Neoplatonic humanism which flourished during the last decades of the *Quattrocento*. As we have already seen, we find in the humanist theology which was developing as a response to both the spiritual and political crisis of this time a tendency to employ religious terms, virtues, and models in a political context and to use political terms in a religious context, in order to reinvigorate both religion and politics. Humanist theologians tried to rearrange these religious and political elements into a new harmony in the structures and institutions of the Florentine city-state by basing them chiefly on the pure foundation of religion, that is, Scripture and revelation. In other words, they treated religion as a universal truth, which was both theoretical and practical. By doing so, humanist theologians hoped to neutralize the contradictory forces and factions in Florentine society and politics.

Immediately after presenting the subject of his sermon and making the usual apology for his own deficiencies, Rinuccini quotes Jerome,[161] and says of the virtue of justice:

> Considering the greatness and extension of this celestial and divine virtue, I see it clearly shining first in the creator and then in all the creatures created by him, and not only in the sensible, corporeal, and material world, but much more infallibly in the intelligible, angelic, and spiritual world. And if we examine the order of nature and of the universe, which were established and directed with such a supremely wise disposition and inexpressible harmony, we will see that justice exists in everything.[162]

Even though the context is political and the subject is justice, Rinuccini begins his discussion by characterizing it as a celestial and divine virtue and associating it with God himself. Then he draws on Neoplatonic

[161] *Ibid.*, pp. 199–200: "… et di poi examino la parvita et imbecillita del mio ingegno, sento manifestamente ogni mia forza et virtu sotto tanta grandeza succumbere, deficere et mancare, et pruovo in me verificarsi la sententia del divo Hieronymo dicente [*Ad Heliodorum* (Ep. 60, PL 22/589)]: *grandes materias ingenia parva non sufferunt, et in ipso conatu ultra vires ausa succumbunt, quantoque maius fuerit quod dicendum est, tanto magis obruitur qui magnitudinem rerum explicare non potest.*"

[162] *Ibid.*, p. 200: "Pero che considerando la amplitudine et extensione di questa celeste et divina virtu, la veggo prima nel creatore et di poi in tutte le creature da lui prodocte manifestamente risplendere, et non solo nel mondo sensibile et corporeo et materiale, ma molto piu infallibilmente nel mondo intelligibile, angelico et spirituale relucere. Et se noi guardiano l ordine della natura et del universo con tanto sapientissima dispositione et inenarrabile armonia condito et ordinato, vedreno la iustitia in ogni cosa contenersi."

cosmology, in particular the idea of emanation.[163] This philosophical background is completely new, and it does not appear to be in his earlier sermons. It is yet another echo of an aspect of Florentine humanism in these years. But justice is not only a celestial and divine virtue operating at the height of the Neoplatonic cosmos. It is also a practical instrument of God's punishment in the lower parts of the cosmos, as Rinuccini argues, citing *Sapientia* ("Wisdom of Solomon") 11, 21.[164] So, after commencing with God and the Neoplatonic cosmology, passing through the lower parts of the universe, using both Neoplatonic premises and a biblical quotation, he proceeds to describe political practice:

> If now we were to consider in the correct way the small world which the Greeks called *microcosmos*, that is, the human being, we would recognize in it the traces of Lady Justice herself, when the sensible, brutal, and inferior forces are subordinated to and obey the superior, rational, and intellectual forces, and their operations are governed with just power.[165]

Rinuccini uses here the classical *topos* of the just rule over the inferior forces (passions and feelings) by the superior rational and intellectual forces inside a human being.[166] But this is also likely to be a model of the political ideal of just government in an empire or a city-state. It is important to note how the religious image of Lady Justice[167] is related

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[163] *Ibid.*: "Da Dio, primo principio, che si puo quodammodo chiamare epsa iustitia in abstracto, o vero che epsa iustitia e uno degli attributi divini, emanano et derivano le gratie et illuminationi de suoi divini thesori nelle prime intelligentie; et da la prime si comunicano ad le seconde, et da le seconde successivamente nelle inferiori si diffundono, et da l ultime intelligentie procedono e moti et le iurtu ne cieli, et da e cieli nelli elementi et cose elementate, con tanto mirabile, armonico et iustissimo ordine, che impossibile e agli huomini poterlo explicare."

[164] *Ibid.*: "Similemente ne luoghi inferiori, tarterei et infernali la iustitia punitiva come instrumento di Dio mirabilmente adopera. Bene adunque dice la Scriptura (Sapientia): *omnia in ordine, pondere et mensura fecit Deus*."

[165] *Ibid.*: "Se ancora rectamente considerereno el piccol mondo chiamato da e greci *microcosmos*, cioe l huomo, in quello riconoscereno li vestigii di epsa madonna Iustitia, quando le sensibili, brutali et inferiori potentie stanno subiecte et obedienti ad le superiori, rationali et intellective, et con iusto imperio si governano le sue operationi."

[166] See e.g., Sallust, *Catiline*, I: "Sed nostra omnis vis in animo et corpore sita est; animi imperio, corporis servitio magis utimur; alterum nobis cum dis, alterum cum beluis commune est"; Plato, *Republic*, 589c8–589d4: "…τὰ μὲν καλὰ τὰ ὑπὸ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, μᾶλλον δὲ ἴσως τὰ ὑπὸ τῷ θείῳ τὰ θηριώδη ποιοῦντα τῆς φύσεως, αἰσχρὰ δὲ τὰ ὑπὸ τῷ ἀγρίῳ τὸ ἥμερον δουλούμενα; συμφήσει· ἢ πῶς; Εάν μοι, ἔφη, πείθηται"; Isocrates, 15 [Antidosis] 180: ὁμολογεῖται μὲν γὰρ τὴν φύσιν ἡμῶν ἔκ τε τοῦ σώματος συγκεῖσθαι καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς. αὐτοῖν δὲ τούτοιν οὐδεὶς ἔστιν ὅστις οὐκ ἂν φήσειεν ἡγεμονικωτέραν πεφυκέναι τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ πλείονος ἀξίαν· τῆς γὰρ ἔργον εἶναι βουλεύσασθαι καὶ περὶ τῶν ἰδίων καὶ περὶ τῶν κοινῶν, τοῦ δὲ σώματος ὑπηρετῆσαι τοῖς ὑπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς γνωσθεῖσιν."

[167] The words *Madonna Iustitia* are not like the title given to noble women such

to the notion of justice in politics. For Rinuccini, one and the same justice derives from God and spreads into the inferior parts of the cosmos until it reaches man.[168] He quotes from the Bible, Aristotle, Jerome, Augustine, Cicero, and Thomas, in order to show the general agreement on the idea of justice in classical and Christian contexts, as well as in religious and political ones.[169] Instead of using reasons and arguments, he simply presents this concord by translating and interpreting his sources. We have already met with these two aspects of humanist theology: 1. presenting concord and agreement instead of reasons and arguments; 2. translating and interpreting biblical, classical, patristic, and scholastic sources for an unlearned audience.[170] We should remember that both aspects are related to the fact that we are dealing in this chapter only with humanist theology in practice, i.e., the practical man-

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as 'Monna Lisa'. Why should one give such a title not to a real woman but to an absract virtue? Virgil's fourth Eclogue was well-known throughout the Middle Ages, and commonly interpreted as a prophecy of the birth of Christ. At verse five we have *iam redit et virgo*, where the virgin is Hesiod's παρθένος Δίκη—on which see below n. 196 and context. But the appearence of a virgin in what was taken to be a Nativity poem must have given rise to identifications with his Virgin mother. For a general discussion regarding the status of Virgil and his images as Christian prophecies see Domenico Comparetti, *Vergil in the Middle Ages*, trans. E.F.M. Benecke (London 1895), pp. 96–103. For the religious and erotic aspects of the image of Mary in the love poetry of the Renaissance see Martines, *Strong Words*… pp. 84–86.

168 Rinuccini, *Lettere*… pp. 200–201: "Sendo adunque iustitia in Dio come proprio attributo, nelle intelligentie separate et angelice, nel mondo corporeo et materiale, et ultimamente nel piccol mondo huomo, quali laude ad lei convenienti et bastanti dagli huomini si potrebbono trovare?"

169 *Ibid.*, p. 201: "Merito adunque di lei si puo dire [Ps 138, 8]: *si ascendero in caelum tu illic es, si descendero in infernum ades*. Et bene Aristotele di lei dice (*V Aethicorum*): *haec igitur iustitia non pars virtutis, sed tota atque integra virtus est* [Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 5,1,1129b25ff.]. Volendo etiamdio el divo Hieronymo la sua legale amplitudine dimostrare (*Ad Mautitam Virginem*) dice in questo modo [*Virginitatis laus (Ep. Hier. Adscripta 13*, PL 30/166)]: *non est aliud igitur iustitia quam non peccare; non peccare autem legis praecepta servare; praeceptorum vero observatio duplici genere custoditur, ut nihil eorum quae prohibentur facias, et cuncta quae iubentur adimplere contendas. Quod est dicere: declina a malo et fac bonum* [Ps 36, 27]. Le quali parole in vulgare suonano in questo modo: la iustitia non e altro che non peccare, et il non peccare e observare e comandamenti della legge, et la observantia de comandamenti in due modi si exercita, cioe non faccendo cosa alcuna di quelle cose che ti sono prohibite, et sforçarti di fare tutte quelle che da la legge ti sono comandate. Et che credete voi che sia questo ordine con tanta proportionata dispositione nelle creature impartito, se non una parte o vero effecto di iustitia? Con cio sia che ordine dal divo Augustino [*Civ.* 19, 13, 1 (PL 41/640)] sia diffinito: *parium dispariumque rerum loca sua cuique tribuens dispositio*; et Marco Tulio [Cic. *De off.* 3, 6, 28]: *haec igitur iustitia omnium est domina et regina virtutum*…"

170 John O'Malley showed in his *Praise and Blame*… pp. 27–28 that the practice of repeating in the vernacular what had just been declaimed in Latin was considered

ifestations represented *viva voce* in sermons. In the next two chapters we shall examine more speculative texts, in which other aspects of humanist theology will be considered.

Rinuccini gives us an interesting reason for not using arguments here:

> And in many of the previous mentioned things, the intention is to approach them anagogically and metaphorically rather than precisely and univocally. And this is in harmony with the venerable doctor saint Thomas, who wanted *nothing to be declared univocally regarding God and creatures*, even if, perhaps, the other school thinks differently; but it is sufficient that justice, according to the saying, *is more a virtue in relation to another than to oneself*.[171]

Even though he claims that the subject discussed here should be dealt with anagogically and metaphorically he does not seem to avail himself of either approach. This raises questions regarding, for instance, the right way of discussing these issues, the limits of human knowledge and rational capacity, the distinction between human and divine truth, and the status of, and relation between, language and reality. The citation from Thomas refers, of course, to his method of analogy in presenting theological issues by using philosophical premises and terms. Yet it is important to note that Thomas included both God and creatures among the issues about which univocal declarations should not be made. None of these issues, however, seems to be important to Rinuccini. He merely points out that justice is related more to relations

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"contra bonas caeremonias" in the context of sermons which were delivered in Rome *coram papa inter missarum solemnia* between 1450–1521, although the popes themselves used this practice in the Middle Ages; in the Renaissance, he concludes, "Latin was the only language proper for the papal liturgies." We can add to this conclusion that in different context this same practice was used by humanists.

[171] Rinuccini, *Lettere*… p. 201: "… et in molte delle cose predecte piu tosto per predicatione anagogica et metaphoricamente che proprie et univoce s intenda appropriarsi. Et questo concorda con il venerando doctore sancto Thommaso, il quale vuole *quod nihil praedicetur de Deo et creaturis univoce* [*Summa theologiae*, I, q. 13, a. 5], licet fortasse l altra scuola aliter sentiat; ma satis est che iustitia, secundum dicta, *sit potius virtus ad alium quam ad se* [*Summa theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 58, a. 2]." Thomas obviously has taken this idea from Aristotle, *EN* V 2, 1130a3–5: "διὰ δὲ αὐτὸ τοῦτο καὶ ἀλλότριον ἀγαθὸν δοκεῖ εἶναι ἡ δικαιοσύνη μόνη τῶν ἀρετῶν, ὅτι πρὸς ἕτερόν ἐστιν· ἄλλῳ γὰρ τὰ συμφέροντα πράττει, ἢ ἄρχοντι ἢ κοινωνῷ." But the humanists could also read a passage of Lactantius (*Epitoma*, 50 [55] 5–6), a passage now taken as a summary of part of Cicero's *De republica* III. Here is part of what Lactantius says about the views of Plato and Aristotle on the virtue of justice: "… et cum ceterae virtutes quasi tacitae sint et intus inclusae, solam esse iustitiam, quae nec sibi tantum conciliata sit nec occulta, sed foras tota promineat, et ad bene faciendum prona sit, ut quam plurimis prosit."

between people, that is, to society and politics, than to the individual. He then moves on to discuss this aspect of justice, omitting the more speculative aspects of the subject.[172] This should again be related to the general tendency of humanist theology, even though we should again remember that there is no clear separation here between the speculative philosophical and theological aspects of justice, on the one hand, and its political implications, on the other. By citing both Plato—on the necessity of justice in every political structure, in nature as well as in the human world—and the Scriptures—on the fact that God himself acts and rules in a just manner—Rinuccini establishes a concord between Plato's *Republic* and the Psalms.[173] This concord is achieved through a short passage in which he attributes to Plato a parallel between those men who act in a just manner and God's governance of the world and the fact that he rewards those who act justly.[174] Giustiniani, the editor of these sermons, was unable to find such a passage in any of Plato's dialogues, and he threrfore offers a possible source in Plato's *Republic*.[175] I suspect that it is more likely that Rinuccini is echoing here the famous passage in *Theaetetus* 176a5–c2 which includes most of these ideas. Through a variety of citations, with slight modifications to

[172] *Ibid.*, p. 202: "Ma perche la materia, pigliandola largo modo, e amplissima, immensa et transcendente et potius alterius quam praesentis contemplationis, pero lasciando questo ad li piu docti, possiamo descendere ad le parti della iustitia come piu accomodata al politico et civile vivere et al nostro proposito."

[173] *Ibid.*, pp. 202–203: "Et pigliandola o volete in genere et universali, o volete in spetie et particulari, si puo facilmente comprendere quanto al humano vivere et maxime politico et civile sia opportuna et necessaria, in tanto che il divino Platone (in libro *De Republica*) vuole che, come il corpo nostro vivere senza anima e impossibile, cosi le republice et regni et imperi senza questa e impossibile reggersi et mantenersi, et nedum le citta et regni, ma ne la natura, ne il mondo puo durare. Et non solo contento di questa laude, ma piu altamente la subleva et sublima quasi insino al cielo, mostrando li operatori di quella assimigliarsi al sommo monarcha Idio, il quale non solum giustissimamente governa l universo, ma etiamdio e munificentissimo retributore delli huomini iusti, secondo la sententia della scriptura che dice: *iustus Dominus iustitiam dilexit* [Ps 10, 8], *retribuens unicuique secundum opera sua* [1 Sam 26, 23; Ps 17, 21]. Et *iustitia retributio illius in filios filiorum his qui servant testamentum eius et memores sunt mandatorum ipsius ad faciendum ea* [Ps 102, 17–18]."

[174] *Ibid.*, p. 202: "Et non solo contento di questa laude, ma piu altamente la subleva et sublima quasi insino al cielo, mostrando li operatori di quella assimigliarsi al sommo monarcha Idio, il quale non solum giustissimamente governa l universo, ma etiamdio e munificentissimo retributore delli huomini iusti…"

[175] *Ibid.*, p. 202, n. 2: "In tal forma questo cenno non ricorre né nella *Repubblica* né in altre opere di Platone." Yet he cites some close parallels in Plato, e.g., *Republic* 613a9–613b1: "ὃς ἂν προθυμεῖσθαι ἐθέλῃ δίκαιος γίγνεσθαι καὶ ἐπιτηδεύων ἀρετὴν εἰς ὅσον δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπῳ ὁμοιοῦσθαι θεῷ."

their interpretation, he presented his listeners with a succession of views starting with Plato and ending with the Psalms.

When Rinuccini mentions the traditional lawgivers (Moses, Mercurius Trismegistus, Lycurgus, Solon, Numa Pompilius), it is important for him to show that the sacred virtue of justice is manifested in their laws in accordance with the Scriptures (Proverbs 8, 15).[176] So, when he uses the words *Questa sanctissima virtu* in reference to justice, this should not be regarded as mere rhetoric. The phrase has meaning in the context of humanist theology: this virtue is the cause of all just laws in every civilization; it is the moving power behind the wisest legislators. It has both a divine source in the Scriptures and historical manifestations.[177] In other words, justice has both religious and political aspects, which are inseparable; but its power derives from a divine source. In the same way Rinuccini compares famous Greek and Roman figures who acted in a just manner with the Christian martyrs by means of citations from Lactantius and Jerome.[178] They all are manifestations of divine justice. Rinuccini emphasizes the divine source of justice, which is the source of every good thing which happens in politics and in life in general,[179] again in accordance with the Psalms[180] but also with Cicero:

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[176] *Ibid*., p. 203: "Questa sanctissima virtu mosse quelli sapientissimi huomini, quos tantopere admiramur, ad comporre et dare le sancte leggi per utilita comune ad li loro populi, come Moyse ad li hebrei, Mercurio Trismegisto ad li egyptii, Lycurgo ad li lacedemonii, Solone ad li atheniensi, Numa Pompilio ad li romani et molti altri, li quali con silentio preterisco. Bene adunque et accomodatissimamente epsa di se medesima dice [Prov 8, 15]: *per me reges regnant et legum conditores iusta decernunt.*"

[177] For other examples of just regimes in empires and cities, in ancient and modern history, see, *ibid*., pp. 203–204.

[178] *Ibid*., p. 203: "Potremovi adducere in mezo infiniti exempli di egregii et famosissimi huomini greci et latini, ad li quali questa sancta virtu ha prestato memoria, gloria et fama sempiterna. Et lasciando e gentili come fu Epamynunda, Melciade, Aristide per cognomento iusto, lasciando Fabii, Publii, Torquati, Marcelli et Scipioni in questo et in altro luoghi tante volte decantati, che diremo d infinito numero di martyri, li quali per zelo della iustitia et constantia et per defensione della fede, cosa sopra tutte l altre iustissima, *quae nihil aliud est quam Dei unici sola, pia et religiosa cultura* [Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 5, 7 (PL 6/570)] con infiniti cruciati et tormenti apresso de tyranni gloriosamente la morte vinxono? Che, secondo che testifica el divo Hieronymo [Jerome, *adscripta ante Martyrologium Vetustissimum.* (PL 30/436)] ogni di del anno, excepto kalen di gennaio, piu che di cinquemilia martyri si possono le feste celebrare, li quali beati et gloriosi vivono et viveranno sempre in felicita et vita sempiterna."

[179] *Ibid*., p. 204: "Questa sancta virtu finalmente e genitrice, alumna et conservatrice di pace et dilectione, doni apresso de mortali prestantissimi, et di tutti gli altri doni pretiosi et supremi, sanza li quali ogni altro bene si puo chiamare diminuto."

[180] *Ibid*.: "Questo intese il propheta quando nel psalmo combinava queste virtu

> And it was not only the prophets who were illuminated by God, but also the pagans thought that benevolence and love were born from justice. Hence Cicero (in *De officiis*): *although every virtue would attract us to itself and would cause us to esteem those in whom the [virtue] itself seems to belong, nevertheless justice and liberality accomplish it best.*[181]

What is important to Rinuccini is to mention the prophets inspired by God—represented here by David—followed immediately by Cicero, one of the pagans who held a similarly inspired view about the importance of justice. He then moves on to describe the consequences of justice (*figliuole di iustitia*)—peace and love—so that he can mention Christ—the ultimate model.[182] There are no arguments here, just examples and models of justice taken from both classical and biblical sources, and found, inseparably, in both political and religious contexts.

Rinuccini then praises the Florentine magistrates, encouraging them to embrace and to exercise this most sacred virtue, together with mercy, equity, and piety, which are parts of it, as the foundation of every good in both public and private life.[183] Justice is described here as composed of *misericordia*, *equita*, and *pieta*. *Aequitas* is either a synonim for *iustitia* or a subdivision of it in the ancient Latin sources.[184] *Misericordia* and

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insieme, dicendo: *misericordia et veritas obviaverunt sibi, iustitia et pax osculatae sunt; veritas de terra orta est et iustitia de caelo prospexit* [Ps 84, 11–12]."

[181] *Ibid.*: "Et non solo li propheti da Dio illuminati, ma ancora li gentili intesono la benivolentia et dilectione nascere da iustitia. Onde Tullio (in libro *Officiorum*): *quanquam omnis virtus nos ad se alliciat, faciatque ut eos diligamus in quibus ipsa inesse videtur, tamen iustitia et liberalitas hoc maxime efficiunt* [Cicero, *De off.* 1, 17, 56]."

[182] *Ibid.*, pp. 204–205: "Et quando la pace et dilectione figliuole di iustitia sieno accepte et grate al sommo Idio, epsa prima verita Iesu Christo benedecto ne rende locupletissimo et verace testimonio, il quale dovendosi partire da li suoi amati discepoli et volendo a quelli lasciare qualche preclaro dono, lascio la pace preclarissimo di tutti, dicendo: *pacem relinquo vobis, pacem meam do vobis* [Io 14, 26]. Et dopo la sua gloriosa resurrectione ad quelli apparendo, sempre li saluto con saluto di pace [Io 20, 19; 20, 21; 20, 26]."

[183] *Ibid.*, p. 206: "… vogliate amare, colere, abbracciare et exercitare questa sanctissima virtu et con debita exhibitione quella impartire et administrare al vostro obedientissimo populo, il quale non vi chiede ne domanda altro che iustitia, con misericordia, equita, et pieta, che sono parti d epsa, come fondamento d ogni ben vivere publico et privato."

[184] See Cicero, *De officiis* I, 30 and Dyck's comments: Andrew R. Dyck, *A Commentary on Cicero, De oficiis* (Ann Arbor 1996), p. 127. Reading the Ciceronian contexts which are also cited by Dyck, one can see why Rinuccini treats it as a subdivision of justice; since these examples point to what we now call equity, most probably following Ciceronian usage. For a detailed discussion of equity in antiquity and mainly in mediaeval canonists, theologians, and philosophers, with further references, see Martin W.F. Stone, 'Equity and Moderation: The Reception and Uses of Aristotle's Doctrine

pieta also have a clear religious resonance and significance. The most important political virtue is thus also a key religious virtue, and so, the political and religious ideal are one and the same: to maintain justice. He goes on to cite Cicero's *De officiis* in order to show, in a classical context, that justice is the source of both eternal praise and reputation, and that without justice nothing can be regarded as praiseworthy.[185] But more important, *aequitas* as a subdivition of *iustitia* appears in Cicero, *De officiis*, I, 30, and frequently in the following discussion. This, he stresses, is not a theoretical issue for the magistrates but rather a very practical one:

> And this, not in word and in external appearance, but rather in actions, results, and truth, so that he may not say to you: *this people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*[186]

Let us recall Caroli's words in Book three of the *Liber dierum*: *Utque in his preceptoribus vestris multis officiis, ita hoc tempore solum pro forma seu spetie res constitutas arbitramini.*[187] It is the same accusation in both cases—of hypocrisy,[188] of words unsupported by actions—and it is relevant not only in politics (republican institutions without republican practices) but also in religion, especially when we consider the criticism of the emptiness and uselessness of perfunctory religious ceremonies and the typical humanistic attack on the hypocrisy of friars and monks.[189] In both cases

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of ἐπιείκεια in Thirteenth-Century Ethics', in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* XVII (2006), pp. 121–156.

[185] Rinuccini, *Lettere*… p. 206: "*Fundamentum enim est perpetuae commendationis et famae iustitia, sine qua nihil potest esse laudabile* [Cicero, *De officiis* II, 20, 71]."

[186] *Ibid.*: "Et questo, non verbo et apparentia exteriore, sed opere, effectu et veritate, a ccio che lei non dica di voi: *populus hic labiis me honorat, cor autem eorum longe est a me* [Mc 7, 6]." The Gospel quotation is taken from Isaiah 20, 13.

[187] Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli—dal '*Liber dierum*'…' p. 226: "As in these teachers of yours [things (states?) have been established with] many duties, thus at the present time, you think that things (states?) have been established merely for the sake of form or appearance."

[188] The word *hypocritus*, ὑποκριτής, is found in the first part of Mc 7, 6: "at ille respondens dixit eis bene prophetavit Esaias de vobis hypocritis…"

[189] See e.g., Garin, *La cultura filosofica*… pp. 168–173. But Camporeale has pointed out the essential difference between this common 'moralistic' humanist critique and the historical critique of Caroli. See Camporeale, 'Mito di Enea…' p. 11: "Mentre la polemica antimonastica, prevalente tra gli umanisti, era quasi sempre motivata da intenti morali—talvolta condotta anzi su toni piuttosto moralistici: la grande 'ipocrisia' fratesca!—, la presa di coscienza del Caroli e la sua riflessione critica si collocano su altri livelli. La sua analisi è tutta centrata sulla perdita di funzione storica della Comunità mendicante, con il trapasso della società comunale fiorentina a quella della città-stato, ora in pieno sviluppo." For the moralistic critique of humanists such as

the crisis in the political and religious institutions is at stake. For Caroli, the spirituality of the religious confraternities was not a solution for the spiritual crisis but rather another symptom of the disease, in which light-mindedness and contempt were mixed up with singing the psalms. Caroli, as a professional theologian, was not amused by this relatively new spirituality, and thus gives us a critical account of it in his *Vitae*, written between 1475–1480.[190] This critique was, on the one hand, part of his reaction against the new Renaissance style and aesthetics in literary texts and works of art (and it is important to note that for him, the culture of the confraternities was part of the new hated style and aesthetics which was in contrast with his ideal: the mediaeval communal style) but, on the other hand, as I tried to show in the previous chapter, we do not deal here with a narrow-minded and ignorant theologian, but rather with a man who had complicated relations with the humanists and was much influenced by humanist education, style, themes, and rhetoric, and thus can be presented as another case study of a humanist theologian, even though he was a professional theologian. In other words, Caroli was one of the greatest critics of Renaissance culture, but he was also part of this culture. In any case, Caroli's critical account of the confraternities' spirituality should be considered beside enthusiastic reactions to the same activity a few years earlier by Ambrogio Traversari and pope Eugene IV, for instance,[191] in order to achieve a more balanced picture of this activity than we sometimes find in the ever-growing secondary literature on this subject, which tends to portray an ideal and pure spirituality of the confraternities.

Leonardo Bruni (*Oratio in hypocritas* of 1417), Poggio Bracciolini (*Dialogus contra hypocritas* of 1447–1448), and Lorenzo Valla (*De professione religiosorum* of 1441), see Trinkaus' discussion in his *The Scope*… pp. 213–220.

[190] Camporeale, 'Giovanni Caroli e le '*Vitae fratrum*…' pp. 260–261: "Dicam tamen, et salva omnium pace dicam, quibus per hec tempora virtutum coloribus abundamus: cetibus profecto hominum, quas confraternitates vocamus, psalmorumque camenis, quas tantopere in familiaritatem versas cernimus, ut, proh dolor, etiam in tabernis, vel meritoriis tabulis, vulgo, per levitatem ac pene contemptum, psalmos decantent." We can also find a critique of the behaviour of some of the members of the religious confraternities implied in the themes of the sacred drama; see Martines, *Strong Words*… p. 67: "We learn thus that religious brotherhoods could be much used for the cynical practice of making business contacts and hawking merchandise." See also Martines' remarks on pp. 75–81.

[191] See Eisenbichler, *The Boys*… pp. 28–30. We have to remember that these favourable reactions were directed at the activity of the youth confraternites, while Caroli's reaction was directed at the *confraternitates*, which could include also adult confraternities; but both youth and adult confraternities used to sing psalms in their ceremonies.

Returning to Rinuccini, we note the way in which he combines politics and religion through the figure of Christ himself. In the biblical context Christ accuses his people by quoting Isaiah's prophecy [29, 13]; Rinuccini, in turn, warns the Florentine magistrates by quoting Christ (*a cio che lei non dica di voi*). Christ is for him the only source of power, not just in religion but also in politics. He is the one who demands that politics should be conducted in a just manner, that justice should be observed in Florentine public life. And, Rinuccini continues, justice is indeed observed in the Florentine republic; a clear indication of this is the name of the most important magistrate in Florence: *gonfaloniere di iustitia*, the official who above all is supposed to maintain justice.[192] He praises justice with a citation from Cicero's *De officiis*,[193] but then warns:

> And indeed when everyone transgresses against justice, justice always shouts in front of God for revenge, and in the final trial before the fearful and dreadful tribunal of Jesus Christ, it will testify against those who have not preserved it.[194]

A call to magistrates to maintain justice is a commonplace ever since the first verse of *Wisdom of Solomon*.[195] Here, however, we have a surprise. The image of *Iustitia* fleeing to God and demanding punishment for injustice is reminiscent of Δίκη, the daughter of Zeus, in Hesiod, *Works and Days* 256–262. Did Rinuccini read Hesiod's *Works and Days*? Quite likely. The first printed edition in Greek appeared in Milan about 1482.[196] But what is more important, in the year in which this sermon was preached, an edition was printed in Milan of the first eighteen idyls of Theocritus and Hesiod's *Works and Days*. Rinuccini himself produced in 1478, again in Milan and probably at the same printing

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[192] Rinuccini, *Lettere*… p. 206: "Che se alcuna patria ha per debito et proprio obiecto la observantia della iustitia, questa florentissima republica sopra tutte l altre pare che ne sia debitrice, con cio sia che il vostro supremo magistrato sia da lei nominato gonfaloniere di iustitia come amatore, professore, exequutore, protectore et fautore di quella, et tante volte l anno et in questo ornatissimo et in moltri altri luoghi facciate predicare et protestare iustitia."

[193] *Ibid.*: "Et che varrebbono queste cose con tanta celebrita predicate, con tanta copia protestate, con tanti preconii et laude magnificate, se con effecto et opere non fussino adempiute? *Iustitiae enim laus omnis in actione et operatione consistit* [Cicero, *De officiis* I, 6, 19]."

[194] *Ibid.*: "Ve igitur omnibus transgredientibus iustitiam, la quale grida sempre dinanzi ad Dio vendecta, et in nel finale iudicio dinanzi al pavendo et tremendo tribunale di Iesu Christo testifichera contra coloro che non la haranno servata."

[195] Sap 1, 1: "Dilligite iustitiam qui iudicatis terram."

[196] M.L. West [ed.], *Hesiod Works and Days* (Oxford 1978), p. 86.

house, the *editio princeps* of Aesop with a Latin translation.[197] All these makes it more than likely that Rinuccini is alluding here to a Hesiodic story which has just been printed, and adopting it to the Christian conception of the last Judgement. This is an excellent example of the way a humanist theologian works.

A sermon from the 1450s and a sermon from the 1490s show a development in Rinuccini himself under the influence of the growing new theology. Even in his later sermon, he still refers to more patristic and scholastic sources than Ficino. Yet he never refers to the *Sententiae* at all, and the form has changed from a logical discussion into a more persuasive rhetoric. In the first sermon, his sources are still mainly Scripture and some of the Fathers and Doctors. When we come to the second sermon the atmosphere has changed. Some Fathers and Doctors are still mentioned; but there is a growing use of recently discovered Neoplatonic sources; references to classical figures such as Lycurgus and Solon, clear references to the new texts of Lactantius and Plato; echoes of the Neoplatonic world-picture—and what appears to be a reference to the relatively new text of Hesiod. Here we are not quite in the world of Ficino—either of the sermons or of *De Christiana religione*—but we have already left much of the scholastics behind us, and have entered at least the intellectual environment of Ficino's circle.

5. *Nesi's Sermons*

The next works to be examined are six sermons in the vernacular delivered by Giovanni Nesi (1456–1522?) to various religious confraternities between 1472 and 1485.[198] In these sermons we find a complex mixture of Florentine humanism and a deep interest in religion, *humanae litterae* and *sacrae litterae* in the context of a spiritual and political crisis. As far as *sacrae litterae* are concerned, Nesi uses many biblical examples and citations, together with some patristic quotations. He also mentions some

[197] Sandys' *History*… vol. 2, p. 104. For familiarity with Hesiod at the time, see below n. 215.

[198] These sermons were published by Cesare Vasoli in his 'Giovanni Nesi tra Donato Acciaiuoli e Girolamo Savonarola—Testi editi e inediti', in *Memorie Dominicane* 4 (1973), pp. 103–179. On pp. 103–122 Vasoli presents a biographical sketch and an intellectual profile of Nesi (on this see n. 231 below). The sermons are on pp. 123–160. A more recent intellectual profile of Nesi can be found in Celenza, *Piety and Pythagoras*… pp. 34–52. See also Weinstein, *Savonarola*… especially pp. 192–205.

of the Doctors of the Church, but far less frequently than one would expect of a professional theologian of earlier generations.[199]

Already in the first sermon, delivered at the confraternity of St Nicholas in 1472, we find the familiar pattern of humanist theology which we have encountered several times before: translating, interpreting, and thus disseminating both classical and Christian Latin citations for the uneducated listeners.[200] These citations are used in various analogical ways instead of arguments and demonstrations. So, for example, Nesi stresses both the religious and political aspects of the virtue of perseverance. He cites Matthew and a Latin proverb in order to show that glory is acquired only at the end.[201] For that reason, all wise men say that we were born for a future life of triumphant and eternal glory.[202] But then he turns to the political aspect of perseverance and mentions cities which, because they did not persist in preserving their laws,

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[199] Nesi seems to refer more frequently to patristic texts. Here one should emphasize the difference between him and Ficino and his other students on this point. But yet his references to mediaeval sources are few: see Celenza's discussion of the sources of Nesi's *Symbolum* in his *Piety and Pythagoras*… pp. 46–47.

[200] Vasoli, 'Giovanni Nesi…' p. 124: "Ma manifestissimo è l'amore ogni cosa superare. Imperò che, come dice Tullio nelle pistole familiari [*Fam.* III, 9, 1], *Nihil est, quod studio et benivolentia, vel amore potius effici non possit.* E' non è alcuna cosa, la quale non si possa fare per lo studio et benivolentia, o veramente piuttosto per amore; el quale da pueritia cominciato et da voi non solamente conservato, ma maravigliosamente accresciuto è stato dell'humanità vostra potissima cagione insieme colla facilità de' costumi vostri, e' quali come una pretiosissima veste u'adornano; et per dare a' sequenti optimo exemplo"; *ibid.*, pp. 125–126: "… chi per una cosa, chi per un'altra al fine non sono pervenuti, affermando il detto di sancto Gregorio: *Incipere multorum est, finire paucorum.* Molti sono quegli che cominciano, ma pochi quegli che finiscono, e' quali indarno si sono affaticati. Imperò che, come dice Augustino [*De opere monachorum* 15; also *Auctor incertus* (Cyprianus Carthaginensis? *Tractatus Cypriano perperam adscriptus necnon Augustino et Origini juxta quosdam*), *De singularitate clericorum* (PL vol. 4, Col 849). Nesi should have quoted II Tim 2, 5: "non coronatur, nisi legitime certaverit"]: *Non coronabitur nisi qui optime certaverit.* Non sarà coronato se non colui che optimamente harà combattuto. Ma chi è quello che optimamente combatte, se non colui che victore sta insino al fine della pugna? Tutti adunque indarno s'affaticano coloro che insino all'ultimo non perseverano."

[201] *Ibid.*, p. 125: "Imperò che, come dice il vangelista Matheo [10, 22]: *Qui perseveraverit usque, hic salvus erit.* A dimostrare non per principio, né per mezzo, ma per fine acquistarsi la gloria. Come per proverbio si dice: *Non per principium laus acquiritur, sed per finem laus commendatur.* Conciò sia cosa che come el corsiere che insino al termine del corso innanzi agli altri persevera ne porta el victorioso stendardo, così l'anima che insino all'estremo della presente vita persevera in servire et contemplare iddio."

[202] *Ibid.*: "Per la qual cagione, come dicono tucti e' savii, noi siamo nati nella futura vita dell'etherna gloria triumpha."

were completely destroyed.[203] These cities fell into ruin, some because of temptation and some because they rejected the advice of both the Scriptures and Cicero to continue rather than stopping after the first stage. Some cities stopped because of stupidity, some because of inexperience, and some because of the impediments which they encountered when trying to persist—they failed to take account of Aristotle's saying that virtue consists in overcoming impediments.[204] The virtue of perseverance thus has two objects in accordance with its two aspects: the soul and the city. It is essential for the salvation of both.

At the end of the sermon, in the context of the distinction between the human and the divine, Nesi cites many examples from classical literature of rich, powerful, and beautiful people. He compares the divine to the soul, and the human to the body.[205] Quoting from Ecclesiastes and St Basil, he translates and interprets these citations, which display an utter contempt for human matters, treating them as if they were totally useless.[206] But this is not what Nesi thinks:

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[203] *Ibid.*: "Quanti si leggie, quante ciptà si potrebbono rachontare, le quali, per non havere persevrato nell'observantia delle leggie, sono da' fondamenti everse et distructe."

[204] *Ibid.*: "Quanti si potrebbe in memoria ridurui, e' quali, insino al mezzo, sono stati ferventi et validi, di poi, chi per temptatione, chi apicchatisi al detto d'Oratio nelle pistole che dice [Horace, *Ep.* I, 1, 32]: *Est quodam prodire tenus, si non datur ultra*, cioè, egli è util cosa andare insino a uno certo luogo, se non è concesso andare più oltre, et similmente a quello tulliano [*Orator* 4: *prima* in our editions] che così si dimostra: *Primam enim sequentem honestum et in secundis tertiisque consistere*, cioè non è vergogna alcuna, anzi è onore a colui che seghuita e' primi luoghi ne' secondi o ne' terzi fermarsi; chi per stultitia; chi per imperitia; chi per le laboriose cose che nel perseverare gli par trovare, non pensando al detto d'Aristotile circa le cose difficile consistere la virtù…"

[205] *Ibid.*, p. 126: "Imperò che non le ricchezze, non la dignità, non l'amplitudine, né gli imperii d'Allexandro magno, non la fortezza di Hercule, no la grandezza di Polifemo, monoculo gigante della Sicilia, non de' due frategli Otho et Ephialte, non la forma di Ganimede, non l'ambitioni, non gl'honori di Creso Re di Lidia, non finalmente tutti e' beni humani fanno l'huomo beato; e' quali sono più differenti da' divini che l'ombra dalla vere cose; et quanto l'anima del corpo è più nobile, tanto e' beni divini sono più nobili degli humani. Imperò che ogni cosa humana è fragile, vana et caduca." Note the number of classical examples which are taken both from mythology and history.

[206] *Ibid.*: "Come disse Salomone: *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas* [Ecclesiastes 1, 2]. Le quali cose sono da essere poco stimate, con ciò sia cosa che San Basilio dica: *Nos quidem, o filii, hanc humanam vitam nihil omnino esse arbitramur, nec bonum quiquid existimandum censemus, nec appellandum quod utilitatem nobis hucusque suppeditet* [*De legendis gentilium libris*, 2,2. See N.G. Wilson [ed.], *Saint Basil on the Value of Greek Literature* (London 1972), II, p. 20]. Per certo, o figliuoli, scrive Sancto Basilio a' sua monaci, noi stimiamo questa humana vita niente essere, né quella cosa che in questa ci arecha alcuna utilità doversi stimare e chiamare niente; et similmente, poco più innanzi, della divina vita parlando, così dice: *Que vero illucusque pervenire nequeunt, ut nullius momenti despicienda.* Cioè: quelle chose, le quali

> But the wisdom of Solon and of the other six sages and the justice of Lycurgus have made man happy; you will obtain this happiness and beatitude in the future life by frequenting this sacred place and by means of your good actions.[207]

Here we have a good example of the nature of Nesi's approach. Starting with numerous examples and citations from classical antiquity, he moves on to a classical *topos*. Then, quoting and interpreting the Scriptures and St Basil's interpretation of it—without mentioning any Doctors of the Church—he dissents from this Christian interpretation, introducing two classical examples. For him the biblical citation is sufficient to indicate the difference between the human and the divine. It is obvious to him—as it should be to any Christian—that the salvation of one's soul is worth much more than any human good; but he is not willing to accept St Basil's total underestimation of the value of human happiness in this life. In fact, he is not willing to conclude, like St Basil, that, since human beings cannot attain divine life, it should be considered to be devoid of utility and importance and, consequently, held in contempt (*le quali insino alla divina vita pervenire non possono, come cose di nessuna utilità et momento sono da essere sprezate*). This type of conclusion and this way of thinking are found in both patristic and scholastic theology. But there, the present life, including all human affairs, is regarded merely as a stage on the way to death and the eternal life which will follow it. As merely a stage, it does not matter what exactly it contains as far as happiness is concerned. But the reference to the wisdom of Solon and the other sages which made man happy in this life is an addition to this Christian idea of future happiness. Thus we have both human happiness in this life and divine beatitude in the next life, but these are clearly separated. This separation is one of the important features of humanist theology in response to the spiritual crisis. Only by a clear separation between what should be regarded as "human" and

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insino alla divina vita pervenire non possono, come cose di nessuna utilità et momento sono da essere sprezate."

[207] *Ibid.*: "Ma la sapientia di Solone et degli altri sei savi et la iustitia di Licurgo fa l'huomo felice, la quale felicità et beatitudine per l'habitudine di questo sancto luogho et mediante le vostre buone opere nella futura vita conseghviterete." Notice that *felicità* was usually more related to the classical Aristotelian notion of εὐδαμονία (earthly happiness with regard to human life and ethics), while *beatitudine* presents the Christian notion of eternal after-life happiness. See Anthony J. Celano, 'Act of the Intellect or Act of the Will: The Critical Reception of Aristotle's Ideal of Human Perfection in the 13th and Early 14th Centuries', in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* LVII (1990), pp. 93–119.

what should be regarded as "divine" could a firm foundation for both religion and human affairs be laid for the believers. Only by means of such a clear separation could religion also help man to bridge the gap and to approach the other, divine sphere by an act of grace. It is important also to emphasize that, unlike scholastic theology, humanist theology was directed mainly at lay believers and not solely at theologians, as we have seen in the practice of presenting detailed translations and interpretations of Latin citations.[208] The wisdom of Solon as well as the just laws of Lycurgus should be regarded as useful and as a source of human happiness in the human sphere, which, however, is entirely different from divine happiness. Religion, by an act of grace, makes it possible for man to transcend his earthly happiness and approach divine beatitude. But this can only be done once man has realized that there is a transcendent happiness which is different from happiness in this life.

In the second sermon, on the Eucharist, which was delivered to the confraternity of St Antonio of Padua in 1474, Nesi reveals, in his introduction to the subject, both his method and the structure of this sermon:

> It is the opinion of Cicero, in his book *De officiis*, my most beloved and dear brothers, that before an orator begins to speak about anything, he must define it, so what he says will be clear: *since every discussion regarding anything, which is undertaken by reason, must proceed from a definition, so that what is being discussed be understood*. I would like to follow this opinion. Firstly, I shall explain what this Eucharist is according to my poor talent, and I shall develop this discussion, as much as time permits. Then, I shall briefly explain, as much as the divine power enables me, what our disposition and preparation for taking the spiritual food should be. And finally, we shall arrive at the most humble act of washing the feet, which is celebrated by us today following the example of our benevolent Lord; these things, to the extent that my feeble faculty can see them, will put an end to my inept speech.[209]

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[208] Compare with Paolo Cortesi's humanist approach to theology in his *Liber sententiarum*, discussed in John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism*… pp. 166–167.

[209] Vasoli, 'Giovanni Nesi…' pp. 127–128: "Egli è sententia di Tullio, nel libro de offitiis, Dilectissimi et cari frategli, che innanzi che l'oratore cominci d'alcuna cosa a parlare, debbi quella diffinire, acciò sia manifesto quel si dice [*De oficiis* I, 7]: *Omnis enim que a ratione suscipitur de aliqua re constitutio debet a diffinitione proficisci, ut intelligatur quod sit de quo disputetur*. La cui oppinione volendo imitare, primamente che cosa sia epso eucarestia secondo il mio debole ingegno exporrò, et nel parlare di quello, quanto l'opportunità del tempo richiede, mi distenderò. Doppo questo qual debba esser nostra dispositione et preparatione a pigliare lo spiritual cibo, quanto la divina potentia mi somministrerà brevemente dirò. Et finalmente verremo all' humilissimo acto del lavare

The structure of this sermon is thus very different from that of a sermon in the scholastic thematic tradition. Nesi follows the opinion of Cicero regarding the proper way of introducing and discussing a theme. The discussion, according to Cicero, must proceed from a definition, and the orator must be very clear about his subject. No arguments or demonstrations are mentioned. Nesi claims that God himself is represented by the word *Eucarestia*;[210] but the nature of God—the one and only mover and the uncreated and infinite principle—was demonstrated not only in the Scriptures but also by the ancient pagan philosophical schools.[211] These philosophical schools and the Scriptures *tutte insieme s'accordano*. Pointing out the agreement between *sacrae litterae* and *humanae litterae* is vital for Nesi. But one notes that this agreement concerns only the natural aspect of God as uncreated and eternal prime mover. That God is also the origin and source of all graces is something that one can only derive from an analysis of the word *Eucarestia*, in Peter Lombard's *Sententiae* (IV, dist. 8, cap. 1). Yet even this reference to the basic textbook of scholastic theology is concerned not with a theological or philosophical opinion but with the Greek etymology of the word Eucharist. Nesi immediately moves on to discuss the nature of God as a philosophical issue, and the concord on this issue between the Scriptures and most of the ancient philosophical schools, with the exception of Democritus and the Epicurean school,[212] and Diagoras, one of the very few known atheists in antiquity.[213] Instead of going into philosophical or theological arguments, he relies on a criterion which

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e' piedi, hoggi dal benigno Signore a nostro exemplo celebrato; le quali cose secondo la nostra piccola facultà vedute, allo inepto parlare fine imporreno."

[210] *Ibid.*, p. 128: "Eucarestia è vocabolo greco, et in latino, come testifica el maestro delle Sententie nel IIII libro, VIII distinctione, buona gratia è interpretato, la quale non è altro senone epso iddio, con ciò sia cosa che lui origine et fonte di tucte le gratie si chiami…" This is the only place where Nesi refers to Peter Lombard's *Liber sententiarum*. Compare this with the number of quotations from Cicero and the various classical examples in order to feel the new atmosphere. Even where the definition is taken from a scholastic source, the need for opening a discussion with a definition is justified by a quotation from Cicero's *De officiis*: see last note.

[211] *Ibid.*: "… et che sia iddio non solamente le sacre lettere ma le philosophice septe cel dimostrano, le quali tutte insieme s'accordano essere uno solo motore et principio increato et infinito…"

[212] *Ibid.*: "… benchè alcuni affermino ogni cosa dalla fortuna essere recta et governata. Della quale sententia Democrito fu auctore; l'Epicuro lo confirmò, Prothagora la messe ambigua."

[213] *Ibid.*: "Di poi et Diaghora la schiuse, et alcuni altri, non stimando essere immortali iddii…"

is not uncommon in ancient writings, an agreement among the philosophical schools.[214] We note the emphasis, in a theological discussion, on the authority of the ancients, which can be seen as an echo of the Florentine humanism of that time. After presenting another point of concord (on spirit being the basic and oldest constituent of the universe) between the prophets and the Sibyls, as well as the ancient poets Orpheus, Homer, Hesiod, Virgil, and Ovid,[215] Nesi then goes back to the ancient philosophers, giving a more detailed account of it.[216] One notices again the preponderance of ancient authors and names. He ends this part of the sermon by returning to *nostra sacra et theologica religione*, citing the Scriptures.[217] The concord between *sacrae litterae* and *humanae litterae* concerns only views about the philosophical attributes of God, which are common to these philosophical schools, but not the graces or the Trinity, which belong solely to *nostra sacra et theologica reli-*

[214] *Ibid.*: "… la quale opinione da molti, anzi da tutti si rifiuta dimostrando la ragione d'essa providentia divina." The source is unlikely to be Cicero, who, in *ND* I, 1–5, emphasizes the dissent among philosophers. Could it be some passage of Augustine drawing on Ciceronian information, but emphasizing the agreement between the important schools? For an example of Augustine emphasizing the agreement among the leading schools of philosophy, as against Epicurus, on a point of Christian interest, see John Glucker, ''Consulares philosophi' again', in *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* XI 3–4 (1965), pp. 229–234. On the theme of concord see Frederick Purnell Jr., 'The Theme of Philosophic Concord and the Sources of Ficino's Platonism', in Gian Carlo Garfagnini [ed.], *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone*, 2 vols. (Firenze 1986), vol. 2, pp. 397–415. See also n. 82 above.

[215] *Ibid.*: "Con ciò sia cosa che non solo e' propheti hebbino tucti e' loro vaticinii in vera sententia raghunati, non solo le dive Sibille… Ma anchora e' poeti come Orpheo di quegli antichissimo disse: *Principio genitus Pheton longo aere natus*. Questo medesimo Homero, questo Hesiodo, questo Marone nel sexto della sua Eneide [Virgil, *Aen.* VI, 724–728]: *Principio celum ac terras camposque liquentes / lucentemque globum lune, titaniaque astra / Spiritus unus alit totamque infusa per artus / mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet.* Questo Ovidio [*Met.* I, 21ff.] afferma." Note that Hesiod appears here. Nesi probably read him in a Latin translation; but if he refers to him in a popular sermon, one assumes some acquaintance with Hesiod among his listeners.

[216] *Ibid.*, pp. 128–129: "Talete milesio principe di septe savi el principio et la cagione del nascere in uno iddio constituì. Similmente Anaxagora, Antisthene, Cleante, Anaximene, Crisippo, Zenone, Aristotile, Platone, Cicerone, Seneca, Varrone et tutti e' Cirenaici, Peripatetici, Achademici, e Cinici, Stetici, Stoici, et tutte le scuole filosophice con diversi nomi ad uno medesimo segno et effecto pervengono."

[217] *Ibid.*, p. 129: "Torniamo alla nostra sacra et theologica religione, la quale essere uno iddio solo Padre, Figliuolo et Spirito sancto, sanza fallo conferma etherno et increato. Dal quale ogni cosa è di niente composto, come dixe Salomone nel libro della Sapientia [Sir 18, 1]: *Qui vivit etherno creavit omnia simul*; et Giovanni nel principio evangelico [Jn 1,1]: *In principio erat verbum, et verbum erat apud deum*; el quale come testa l'apostolo Paulo, è quel medesimo che questo eucharestia, secondo le sue parole in sancto Luca [Lk 22, 19]: *Hoc est enim corpus meum.*"

gione. So, Nesi is making a clear distinction between *sacrae litterae* and *humanae litterae*. Here follows a detailed discussion of various theological questions about the Eucharist,[218] in which Nesi cites the Scriptures and some Doctors of the Church (Peter Lombard, Thomas, Gregory), but also Augustine and (significantly in this context) Cicero.[219] Although scholastic sources are drawn on, this is certainly not a scholastic *quaesita disputatio*, and we do not have arguments, refutations, and conclusions, but rather discussions of theological questions using many citations from the Scriptures, together with references to the Doctors of the Church who attempted to solve these problems. No philosophical discussions, no philosophical premises or names of philosophers are mentioned in this part of the sermon. In this respect, Nesi differs from Ficino. Ficino would use classical philosophical sources even in purely theological discussions.

In the final section Nesi deals with the act of washing the feet. The discussion of the virtue of humility brings him once again to the concord between *la christiana religione* and *la pagana fede*. In such a context, a Christian virtue which was also recognized by pagan authorities, one can refer to both types of sources without distinction. Thus Nesi cites, translates or refers to Cicero, Jerome, Gregory the Great, Pericles, Basil, and Socrates.[220] Such an intensive mixture of Christian

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[218] E.g., *ibid.*: "Ma perché cagione questa institutione del sacramento fussi facta"; *ibid.*, p. 130: "Parmi anchora si richiegga di mostrare perché cagione idio volle sotto spetie di pane et di vino la propria carne et el vero sangue all'humana generatione concedere; *ibid.*: "Similemente penso doversi dire perché epso corpo del vero iddio in due spetie del pane et del vino sia distinto et diviso"; *ibid.*: "Vorrevi anchora, Reverendi Padri, domandare perché cagione l'acqua in epso sacramento debba co' lui non essere mixta."

[219] *Ibid.*, pp. 129–132.

[220] *Ibid.*, pp. 132–133: "E' adunque, humilità, secondo Tullio, *Virtus qua homo verissima cognitione sui vilescit sibi ipsi* [I could not find the place. *Vilescit* is not a Ciceronian word. This citation comes in fact from Bernard of Clairvaux's *Liber de gradibus humilitatis et superbiae* I,2. See J. Leclercq, C.H. Talbot, H.M. Rochais [eds.], *S. Bernardi Opera*, 8 vols. (Roma 1957–1977), vol. 3, p. 17. One notes that this definition of *humilitas* is presented right at the beginning of Bernard's book, but Nesi constantly has "Tullio" in his mind]. Humilità è virtù, per la quale l'huomo con verissima cognitione di sé medesimo vile si riputa. Questa è quella nella quale ogni bene si riposa. Questa è la guida dell'altre virtù, come dixe el divino Hieronimo [*Epist.* CI, 15]: *Prima christianorum virtus humilitas, eaque virtutum est custos*. Questa è quella che nella verità consiste, con ciò sia cosa che 'l suo opposto, superbia, sia sempre della verità discrepante. Donde dixe Gregorio [*Moralia in Iob*, XXIV, 16]: *Aliena semper est veritate superbia*. Questa è quella la quale muove iddio a misericordia et ad amare, come el predecto auctore testifica [*ibid.*, VII, 35]: *Superbia odium generat, humilitas amorem*. Et quando questa virtù agl'infimi si conviene, tanto a' superiori è più consentanea. A questa non solamente la christiana religione, ma la pagana fede grandemente ci exhorta, come in quello de offitiis afferma Tullio

and classical sources where appropriate is, as we have seen, typical of humanist theology, especially when classical sources which were hardly known to scholastic theology are invoked—such as Hesiod, the philosophical writings of Cicero, Plato's dialogues, and the Neoplatonic tradition, the rediscovery of which was among the fruits of the fifteenth-century humanism. Such a connection between Christian and pagan ideas wherever a continuity can be established will achieve a greater significance in Ficino's discussion of Christianity as the culmination of all earlier religions. We shall discuss it in chapter three below.

In the fourth sermon, on humility, delivered to the *Fraternitas Nativitatis* in 1476, Nesi emphasizes the gap between human disciplines and the knowledge we acquire through them, on the one hand, and divine knowledge, on the other.[221] Practising religious virtues such as obedience and humility seems to be the only way to make real progress towards God.[222] We find here again a clear distinction between the human and the divine, presented, as usual, by means of a classical example:

> The second contemplation, most illustrious fathers and most beloved brothers, is when the created being, considering the supreme dignity of its creator, turns its mind upon itself, recognizes that it is located at such

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[*De officiis* I, 90]: *Quanto superiores sumus, tanto nos geramus summissius*, quanto noi siamo superiori, tanto con maggiore subgiectitudine ci debbiamo sottomettere. Questa virtù molto da' poeti, non meno dagli historici, molto più da' propheti è laudata. Donde el nostro Signore dixe [Mt 23, 12]: *Qui se humiliat exaltabitur. Qui se exaltat humiliabitur.* Questa e' doctori theologici et evangelisti vanno predicando. Quanti exempli in memoria ridurvisi potrebbe, non solamente de' christiani, ma infedeli! Non havete voi di quel Pericle atheniese, che con ciò sia cosa che uno certo huomo con villanie, obiurgationi, et contumelie tutto uno giorno incitarlo ad ira s'ingegnassi, lui per humiltà tacessi, come se niente a lui fussi detto; et facta già nocte, quel che tutto di l'havea tentato, maravigliandosi si partia. Ma Pericle, chiamato uno servo col lume, costui insino a casa seghuitò, acciò che nella humiltà et constantia maggiore habito facessi. Non rachonta el degnissimo theologo Basilio greco che battendo uno con impeto la faccia di Socrate, figliuolo di Sophlonisco, non volle a lui repugnare, ma insino a tanto che l'ira di quello fussi satiata nelle sue mani si dette; et di poi nella sua fronte el nome di colui che l'haveva percosso scripse, come se una statua fussi stato."

[221] *Ibid.*, p. 140: "Imperò chi è colui che possa le cose divine, se non con divina celerità d'ingegno investigare? Et con divina lingua raccontare? Questo tempo acceptabile è di tanti mysterii, di tanti exempli, di tanti precepti ripieno, che appena chi fussi nell'oratoria facultà, da' greci rethorica chiamata, exercitato, nello studio di sapientia, detto philosophia, per l'assidua electione erudito, et nella vera cognitione de' divini segreti, theologia nominata, lungo tempo ravolto, una minima parte potrebbe con debite laude celebrare."

[222] *Ibid.*: "Ma di poi, rivolgendo gli occhi della mente in verso l'obedentia, virtù singularissima, cognobbi non solamente questi sancti et divoti luoghi all'etherno iddio dedicati non potersi sanza quella mantenere, ma qualunque altro essere costretto in brevissimo tempo cadere in extrema ruina."

> a low level that no comparison can be made with it [the divine], since between infinite things and the finite there is no proportion; and seeing that one is divine, the other human, one is immortal, the other mortal, one is the lord of all lords, the other, if it find itself in sin, is servant of all servants, one, finally, is most clean and pure from any sin, the other defiled in so much filth of sin, and, not least, the more it humiliates itself on earth, the more it is superior, it observes that maxim of the Apollonian oracle, as a most difficult thing, that is: know oneself, remembering one's sins, it remembers its shameful acts, it repents its errors; from this comes true contrition, complete penance, and the intention not to sin.[223]

The famous maxim of Delphi γνῶθι σεαυτόν is interpreted as the Christian virtue of recognizing one's sins. This reminds us of our lowly cosmic status and, thus, the immeasurable gap between man and God, between the human and the divine. This gap is the reason for Nesi's continuous attack on human knowledge and his praise for Christian virtues such as charity—citing Augustine, in the fifth sermon, which was devoted to this subject and which was delivered to the *Societas Nativitatis* in 1477.[224] Nesi seems to be reacting against scholastic intellectual tradition, so it is no wonder that he hardly mentions the Doctors of the Church and relies almost exclusively on the Scriptures and Church Fathers, supplemented by classical examples, though he explicitly criticizes Aristotle:

> And that prudence which Aristotle calls the source and origin of all virtues would be imperfect if not combined with charity.[225]

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[223] *Ibid.*, p. 142: "La seconda contemplatione, Preclarissimi Padri et amantissimi Frategli, è quando la creatura, considera la suprema degnità del suo creatore, rievocando la mente a sé medesima, cognosce sé in tanto infimo grado essere collocata che nulla comparatione col lui se ne può fare, perché fra la cosa infinita et la finita non è misura; et vedendo lui divino, lei humana, lui immortale, lei mortale, lui Signore di tutti signori, lei, se in peccato si truova, serva di tutti e' servi, lui, finalmente, da ogni vitio nettissimo et inmaculato, lei in tanta lordura di peccato coinquinata, niente di meno quanto egli è superiore, tanto più in terra humiliarsi, observa quel precepto che da Apolline pythio, come cosa difficillima, è comandato, cioè sé medesima cognosce, ricordarsi de' suo' peccati, si riduce alla memoria e' suoi flagitii, si ravede de' suoi errori; di che ne nasce vera contritione, intera penitentia, et proposito di non peccare…"

[224] *Ibid.*, pp. 149–150: "In che ci possono giovare quelle tre doctrine che anno conseguito nome di scientia: Phisica, Mathematica, Methaphysica, sanza la carità? Anzi, in che non ci possono nuocere? Quegli fanno gl'huomini ventosi et superbi. Questa gli rende humili et mansueti; et sì come il cibo indigesto genera mali humori, così la scientia sanza la carità mali costumi produce. Questo testifica Augustino dicendo [*Sermo* CCCLIV. *Ad continentes habitus*]: *Amate scientiam, sed anteponite caritatem. Scientia si sola insit inflat quem vero caritas hedificat. Scientia non permittit inflari.* Per questa si cognoscono e' discepoli di Christo. Imperò che, come dice Augustino, non le prophetie, non e' vaticinii, non e' miracoli, ma la somma carità e' suoi discepoli c'insegna."

[225] *Ibid.*, p. 151: "Et quella prudentia che Aristotile chiama fonte et origine di tutte le

In the sixth sermon, also on charity, which was delivered to the confraternity of the Magi in 1486, we find, on the one hand, a methodological critique of scholastic theology and, on the other, a clear echo of Ficinian Neoplatonic imagery. Nesi begins his sermon with a description of a vision in which he heard a thundering voice from heaven inside his head—while he was thinking about his sermon and how to introduce the inner recesses of sacred theology—rebuking him, a mere terrestrial animal with weak shoulders, for daring to try to grasp the heavens or to understand the one who sits above the Cherubim and flies beyond the wings of the winds, the one who governs many abysses and inhabits inaccessible light.[226] Nesi was being accused—or rather was accusing himself—of the extreme arrogance of mortals, who attempt to use their finite intellect to comprehend infinite and divine matters. The divine voice continues its attack on the use of human intellect in divine matters, in what seems to be more a critique of the method of scholastic theology and of the scholastic emphasis on theory than of Nesi's own style:

> Neither Mosaic law nor Evangelical law commands you to investigate divine secrets with sharp and acute syllogisms, but rather [both laws command you] to love divine goodness with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.[227]

Now we can see why Nesi chose this kind of emotive rhetoric, since it provides an alternative to the accepted style and method of scholastic theology. Love and syllogisms are introduced as two opposing approaches to theological matters, in other words, two distinct ways of

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virtù sarebbe imperfecta, se colla carità non fussi congiunta [Aristotle, *EN* VI, 1144b17–28]."

[226] *Ibid.*, p. 152: "… mentre ch'io penso, per satisfare in qualche parte alla sublimità degl'intellecti vostri, entrare negl'intimi penetrali della sacrosancta theologia, et quanto patisce la facultà del mio tenue ingegno salire ad la suprema contemplatione del hodierno sacramento, sacramento di tutti sanza controversia divinissimo; ecco quasi di cielo una tonante voce negli orecchi della mia stupefacta mente così risuona: Come tenti, o giovane imprudente, o terreno animal, come tenti cole debili spalle sostenere il cielo? Come tenti, o extrema arrogantia de' mortali, cognoscer quello *qui sedet super cherubin*, quello *qui volat super pennas ventorum*, quello *iudicia cuius abyssus multa*, quello, finalmente, *qui lucem habitat inaccessibilem*?"

[227] *Ibid.*, pp. 152–153: "Non ti comanda la mosaica, non l'evangelica legge che con sottili et acuti syllogismi ricerchi e' divini secreti, ma con tutto il cuore, con tutto l'animo, con tutta la mente, ami la divina bontà [ואהבת את ה׳ אלהיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאודך: Dt 6, 5; quoted Mt 22, 37]." The emphasis here is not on the will as against the intellect: this will come later; but on the love of God as against syllogisms.

"doing theology".[228] Humanist theology, as we have seen, laid more emphasis on the Scriptures[229] and the Church Fathers, hardly ever referring to the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard or to other works by the Doctors of the Church. In addition to Aristotle, so dominant in scholastic theology, together with his interpreters Alexander and Averroes, we find in humanist theology much intensive use of classical authors and examples, including philosophers such as Plato and the Neoplatonists, whose works were not widely available in the Middle Ages.

Nesi continues his attack on the investigative tendency of scholastic theology:

> It thus follows that, like the timber which burns not because it has received light but rather because it was kindled, so too you become divine not only by investigating the divine light, but rather by becoming inflamed with divine love. You will be a more perfect image and similitude of the eternal God, the more efficaciously you represent your exemplar, the more you represent it by love than by learning; and His image will shine in you more when you are loving than when you are speculating, since He is more pleased by the person who loves Him than by the one who knows Him. As for the person who both knows and loves [Him], it is not because he knows, but rather because he loves, that he is beloved by Him.[230]

Love is superior to doctrine, investigation, speculation, and knowledge. Faith or theology should not consist of theoretical speculations about the divine light, but rather of practising the virtues by imitating divine love. This is a theme which one already finds in ICor 1, 18–28 and

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[228] Compare with O'Malley, *Praise and Blame*… p. 70.

[229] See n. 8 and its context.

[230] Vasoli, 'Giovanni Nesi…' p. 153: "Imperò che si come il legno non per ricevere lume ma per accendersi diventa fuoco, così tu, non per investigare solamente la divina luce, ma per infiammarti del divino amore, divino diventerai. Tu se' imagine et similitudine del eterno dio, tanto più perfecta, quanto più efficacemente il tuo exemplare rapresenti. Più lo rapresenti per amore che per doctrina. Più in te riluce la sua effige amando che speculando, più gli piace chi l'ama che chi lo conosce. Et chi lo conosce et ama, non perchè lo conosce, ma perchè l'ama, da lui è redamato." We can find a similar contrast between knowing and loving God in Ficino's early account of the will and the intellect, his famous letter to Lorenzo de' Medici written in 1474. See Sebastiano Gentile [ed.], *Marsilio Ficino. Lettere I—Epistolarum familiarium liber I* (Firenze 1990), pp. 201–210; see p. 205: "… quia nemo in hac vita vere cognoscit Deum, vere autem amat Deum quoquo modo cognitum qui spernit cetera propter Deum"; "Secunda: quemadmodum deterius est odisse Deum quam ignorare, sic melius amare quam nosse. Tertia: cognitione Dei possumus male uti, scilicet ad superbiam, amore eius male uti non possumus." It is most likely that Nesi read this letter which was circulated among Ficino's close friends.

especially the whole of chapter 13, which ends with an emphasis on *caritas*. The change from a focus on divine light through investigation to an emphasis on divine love through inflammation, that is, by practising the virtues, signifies the difference between scholastic and humanist theology as Nesi tries to present them to his audience. Even voluntarist scholastics employed arguments and syllogisms in order to establish the priority of divine love. We have seen that Nesi disapproves of "sharp and acute syllogisms" in this context. Ideas such as representing an exemplar or the centrality of divine love constitute a clear Neoplatonic echo, if we recall Ficino's philosophy of love as set out in his well-known and influential commentary on Plato's *Symposium*,[231] where we find, for instance, the theme, also discussed by Nesi, of the status of the lover who dies and comes back to life through his beloved.[232]

[231] Ficino composed two versions (one in Latin, the other in the vernacular) of his commentary in 1469. See, for the vernacular version, Marsilio Ficino, *El libro dell'amore*, ed. Sandra Niccoli (Firenze 1987); for the Latin version see Pierre Laurens [ed.], *Commentaire sur le banquet de Platon, de l'amour* (Paris 2002). See also *Opera omnia* … vol. 2, pp. 316–359. On the relations between Nesi and Ficino and his circle, and on the importance and unusual nature of this sermon, see Vasoli, "Giovanni Nesi…" p. 105: "Il Nesi (che frattanto aveva iniziato anche la sua vita pubblica, con l'elezione a Priore nel maggio-giugno 1485) fu presto uno dei seguaci più entusiasti e fedeli della 'divina Academia'; e se il Ficino lo citò tra i propri discepoli nella nota epistola a Martino Uranio, certi testi e documenti dimostrano la sua amicizia e i suoi rapporti con uomini legati all'ambiente ficiniano, come Naldo Naldi e Ugolino Verino, nonché con altre personalità di primo piano della vita intellettuale fiorentina del tempo, il Poliziano e Bartolomeo della Fonte. Platonico nelle poesie d'amore del suo canzoniere, spesso esemplate su evidenti modelli petrarcheschi, egli testimoniò però, nel modo più esplicito, la sua fede filosofica e religiosa nella orazione 'de charitate' che tenne il 23 marzo del 1486 (st. fior. 1485) alla Confraternita dei Magi; un'orazione che—come vedremo—è veramente un singolare documento di spiritualità e di barocca eloquenza 'ficiniana'." See also Vasoli's discussion on pp. 106–122 of Nesi and his relations with other Florentine humanists, his intellectual background, and his place in the spiritual climate of Florence in the last decades of the *Quattrocento*. Vasoli does not seem to notice in his analysis that we have here a totally new humanist theology with a serious critique of scholastic theology.

[232] Vasoli, 'Giovanni Nesi…' p. 156: "Che più si può dire della mia excellentia? Io finalmente l'amante ne l'amato et l'amato nel amante converto. Il primo perché, morendo l'amante, in sè vive nel amato. Il secondo perchè, ricognoscendosi l'amato nel amante, nel amante ama sè medesimo. Dove amando sè, ama l'amante già in amato converso. Questa forza amatoria quanto è più voluntaria, tanto è più potente"; Ficino, *El libro dell'amore*… p. 39: "E non vi sbigottisca quello che d'un certo amante disse Platone, el quale veggendo uno amante disse 'quello amatore è uno animo nel proprio corpo morto, nel corpo d'altri vivo' [see n. 2, p. 39, on this citation]"; *ibid*., p. 40: "Platone chiama l'amore amaro, e non sanza cagione, perchè qualunque ama amando muore; e Orpheo chiamò l'amore uno pomo dolce amaro: essendo lo amore volontaria morte, in quanto è morte è cosa amara, in quanto volontaria è dolce. Muore

Nesi emphasizes again the difference between the human and the divine.[233]

Here, in the final words which Nesi heard in his vision, Neoplatonic imagery and premises—the divine sun, the divine mind, and the inspiration of divine love—are all used to show that man, relying on his weak and finite intellect, cannot comprehend the recondite mysteries of divinity without divine inspiration from outside and from above. Nesi continues to stress the gap between the human eye and the divine sun; he also refers to the inability of language—obviously a human product—to express things which the intellect cannot understand and the mind does not comprehend.[234] What follows from this emphasis is the contrast between faith, on the one hand, and logical arguments, speculation, and the acts of the human intellect, on the other. Faith reveals God to us through an argument which does not have the outward appearance of an argument.[235] The sermon ends again with a criticism of philosophers and theologians, who, in this context, are no doubt the scholastics:

> O philosophers, and what is your knowledge without me? And what are your visions if not an express image of pride, an express [image of] vanity? Your ability without my warmth is worth as much as the light of the moon without the warmth of the sun.[236]

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amando qualunque ama, perché el suo pensiero, dimenticando sé, nella persona amata si rivolge"; *ibid.*: "Adunque non è in sé l'animo dello amante da poi che in sé non opera. S'egli non è in sé, ancora non vive in sé medesimo; chi non vive è morto e però è morto in sé qualunque ama, o viv'egli almeno in altri."

[233] *Ibid.*, p. 153: "Non sa' tu che l'ingegno vostro invano circa le superne cose si ravolge, se lume divino non s'infonde? Non s'infonde lume divino, se l'anima ad la divina mente come la luna al sole non si converte? Non si converte se prima del divino amore non si accende. Accesa allora l'anima del divino amore, il divino sole con aquilina vista contempla. Et però rattieni il corso della tua immoderata voglia; postponi l'altre et inscrutabili speculationi; non cercare gli absconditi mysterii della divinità; seguita me; considera me; raguarda me, che sono quella matutina stella, nel lume della quale vedrai l'invisibil lume."

[234] *Ibid.*: "Come può l'oscuro et informe occhio non solamente il sole, ma le spetie de' colori dal sole procedenti vedere? Come può la lingua exprimer quello che l'intellecto non intende, che la mente non comprehende?

[235] *Ibid.*, p. 156: "La fede con argomento non apparente vi mostra dio"; *ibid.*, p. 158: "Che dirò io delle speculationi? Che degli acti dello intellecto? O ciechi, o nocturni animali, che vedete voi sanza lume mio? Parvi comprehendere il sole, et voi apena la luna, ombra del sole discenete."

[236] *Ibid.*, p. 158: "O philosophi, et che è la vostra scientia sanza me? Et che sono e' vostri sogni, se non expressa imagine di superbia, expressa vanità? Tanto vale il vostro ingegno sanza il mio calore, quanto il lume della luna sanza il caldo del sole."

> O philosophers, then, if you wish to enter into the holiest temple of divinity, open the gate, not the gate of the intellect, in which the soul descends from God, but rather the gate of the will, in which the soul ascends toward God. Through this gate you should enter with a burning flame, and you will see the invisible world, you will understand incredible and true things. O theologians, if you wish to plough the waves of the deep sea of my Sacrament with your boat, you should love God; by loving Him, you will know Him; by knowing Him, you will possess Him; by possessing Him, you will enjoy Him. O mortals, if you wish to free yourselves from the Babylonian servitude, you should serve God with love, He who, in order to free you today from death, became a servant.[237]

The emphasis on the will as against the intellect may be influenced by mediaeval theses that gave priority to will over reason; but the criticism of philosophers and theologians and their methods, and the Neoplatonic imagery, are new. Like other humanists, Nesi accepts the traditional separation between the human and the divine, as well as the task of religion to help man bridge the gap and approach the divine. But unlike most of the scholastics, he emphasizes the practice of divine love as a basis for achieving divine grace. In this emphasis on practice and emotions he appeals to a wider audience than that of the scholastics, ordinary members of the community and the confraternities. At the same time, he draws on a wide range of Christian and pagan sources, and incorporates into his sermon some new ideas and imagery taken from the newly discovered Neoplatonic literature.

[237] *Ibid.*, pp. 158–159: "O philosophi, adunque, se volete entrare nel sacratissimo tempio della divinità, aprite la porta, non la porta dell'intellecto, per la quale dio ad l' anima descenda, ma la porta della volontà, per la quale l'anima a dio ascenda. Per questa porta entrate coll'accesa fiamma, et vedrete l'invisibil mondo, cognoscerete cose incredibili et vere. O theologi, se volete con vostra barca solcare il profondo pelago del mio sacramento, amate dio; amandolo lo cognoscerete; conoscendo il possederete; possedendo il fruirete. O mortali, se volete liberarvi dalla babylonica servitù, amando servite a dio, il quale, per farvi liberi, hoggi della morte s'è facto servo." This is interesting. The Soul descends from the One through *Nous*: this is Neoplatonic. But in Neoplatonism, the ascent is conducted in the same way upwards. Here, the ascent is made into something different, through the Christian Will.

6. *Other Sermons*

I shall now examine a few sermons by other humanists found in MS Riccardiana 2204. This manuscript was used by Vasoli for his edition of the first five sermons of Nesi,[238] but it also contains other sermons which can be used to further our study of humanist theology.

In a sermon entitled *Exortatio ad osculum crucis*, delivered by Francesco Berlinghieri (1440–1501) to the confraternity of St Vincentio in 1476, we find the usual mixture of Neoplatonism, theology, and the Scriptures,[239] in which rhetoric of persuasion replaces logical arguments.[240]

In another sermon, on Christ's body, delivered by Giovanni di messer Donato Cocchi[241] to the confraternity *della nativita di cristo* in March 23, 1474, we find an account of the Eucharist and of the limitations of language:

> Taking into account that, just as St Thomas says in the sermon [mentioned above]: there is no one who can, with a human intellect, under-

[238] Vasoli, 'Giovanni Nesi…' p. 123. Other manuscripts of humanist's sermons mentioned by Vasoli are Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Magl. XXXV. 211; Florence, Accademia Toscana di Scienze e Lettere 'La Colombaria', 247.

[239] Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS. 2204, f. 165^{r}: "Questa gloria, questo lume andando investigando alcuni principali phylosophi sommo bene epsi chiamarono. Platone di tutti sapientissimo questo divino furore apellava. Socrate di lui maestro solo la mente delle operatore del bene al celo doven tuornare confessava [this is a reference to themes which recur in Plato's *Phaedrus*]. Paulo et Dyonisio Ariopagita fra nostri cristiani insigni et celeberrimi theologi Noi glinvisibili et segreti misterii di dio in questa vita potere argumentare per li effecti et cose maravigliose da noi viste affermarono. Questa gloria vide et cognobbe inhuman corpo David propheta; onde namorato del sommo giesu ogni giorno allui parlando diceva. Zelus domus tuae commedit me [Jn 2, 17, from Ps 69, 10]. et altrove. Ad te levavi oculos meos: qui habitas in celis [Ps 123, 1]." On the theme of divine frenzy in Ficino see Sebastiano Gentile, 'In margine all'epistola 'De divino furore' di Marsilio Ficino', in *Rinascimento* XXI (1981), pp. 33–77. On the theme of holy craziness in the poetry of the Renaissance see Martines, *Strong Words*… pp. 52–58.

[240] *Ibid.*, f. 165^{v}: "Et si noi useremo vera et sincera penitentia di tutti enostri peccati daquegli mondi et liberi di vita vivereno come per Ezechiel [Ez 18, 21–32] intemente persuasi siamo. Convertiano a dio nostro signore con tutto el quore, come ricorda Joel propheta [Ioel 2, 12]."

[241] Giovanni di Donato Cocchi was "a young man with intellectual potential" who "became part of Ficino's group at the Platonic Academy and eventually prior of the Academia Ficiniana (November–December 1493)." See Eisenbichler, *The boys*… p. 186, following Arnaldo Della Torre's *Storia dell'Accademia Platonica di Firenze* (Florence 1902), p. 725. After Hankins' critique of the term 'Platonic Academy' in this context (Hankins, 'The Myth of the Platonic Academy…'), and especially his remarks on Cocchi in n. 52, on p. 444, we can just conclude that Cocchi was one of Ficino's students.

> stand, nor with a mortal language explain, the sweetness of such a sacrament.[242]

The phrase 'mortal language' borrowed (according to Cocchi) from Thomas becomes relevant in the context of humanist theology, in which there is a sharp distinction between language, as a human product, and religious truth, which means that the study of language and philology cannot deal with religious truth. This can be seen from the sermon by Christoforo Landino (1424–1498) on Christ's body delivered to the confraternity of the Magi, where we find the same phrase:

> Why I am so confident in my most weak power, which imitates with mortal language [in an effort] to express the divinity?[243]

The divinity cannot be expressed by means of a mortal language on account of its mortal nature; language therefore becomes part of history and the human sciences. The separation between humanity and divinity is an instrument employed by humanists to establish new methods and a new rhetoric in theological discussions, as well as a new and more practical religious life. This obvious distinction—so common in the theological investigations of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church—takes on a new meaning in the context of the development of humanist methods and the humanist critique of scholastic theology. Landino, like other humanists, criticizes the methods of scholastic theology: syllogisms, logical arguments, and demonstrations, which, he says, belong to the *via naturale*; in confronting the mysteries of faith, however, we should instead contemplate the mysterious Sacrament by means of the *sopranaturale via*.[244] He, too, thus emphasizes the gap between the finite

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[242] Ricc. 2204… f. 169^{r}: "Considerato che come dice san Thommaso nel prealegato sermone: none alcuno che possa con intellecto humano intendere, ne con lingua mortale exporre la suavita di tal sacramento…" In the *Summa theologiae* III, q. 74, a. 3, we have "Hoc autem sacramentum pertinet ad *suave jugum* Christi…" But I could not find the reference to the mortal language in Thomas. But see Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* I, 3, 15: "qua in re quoniam et sensu deficimur et verbis, quia neque tantum intellegentiae lucem pectus humanum neque explanationem tantarum rerum capit lingua mortalis, id ipsum intellegere nos oportet ac dicere."

[243] *Ibid.*, f. 176^{v}: "o perche tanto nelle debilissime mie forza presummo che mimetta con lingua mortale a exprimere la divinita." This sermon is discussed in some detail by Trinkaus, *In Our Image*… vol. 2, pp. 638–644.

[244] *Ibid.*, f. 172^{v}: "… ci comanda et costrigne non solo ad humilitare una afare prigionere, la quale nostre menti informa che posto da parte ogni inquisitione, la quale per sylogystici argumenti cerca la dimostratione et scientia della cosa alla sola fede con sincera et ardente carita ci sotto mettiamo che havendo a contemplare il sacratysimo misterio del verace per corpo di christo, el quale non per naturale ma per

and infinite, and the need for the practice of devotion in order for finite man to feel closer to the divine.[245] It is important to note that Landino does not mention any Doctor of the Church.

Donato Acciaiuoli (1429–1478), in a sermon on Christ's body, delivered to the confraternity of the Magi in 1468, expresses the same idea of a gap between human inteligence and divine matters:

> In considering the sacred excellence and supreme dignity, there is no intellect which does not become diminished, no sense which does not remain confused, no language which does not become mute.[246]

Acciaiuoli also shares the tendency we have already encountered in the sermons of many humanists, of translating, and thus disseminating, Latin citations for his listeners.[247] He mentions Jerome[248] and Augustine,[249] but no Doctors of the Church. Jerome and Augustine as we have seen are quoted by other humanists, probably because of their special

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sopranaturale via nellazimo pane discendere ma la sincera indubitata et constante fede ci sara ghuida."

[245] *Ibid.*, f. 174^{r}: "perche frallo infinito al finito nonve misura."

[246] *Ibid.*, f. 180^{r}: "… perche considerando la sacra excellentia et supprema dignita none mente alcuna che non vengha manco, none senso che non rimanga confuso, none lingua che non diventa muta." This sermon is discussed in some detail by Trinkaus, *In Our Image…* vol. 2, pp. 644–647. Trinkaus claims that Acciaiuoli's sermon "is without doubt an example of an Italian *devotio moderna*, fully in the spirit of the humanistic studies towards which Acciaiuoli was equally devoted. Moreover, the doctrinal content is essentially evangelical and pious, rather than doctrinal, metaphysical, or theological. And yet he was, as is known, an Aristotelian and spokesman, perhaps, of Argyropoulos' interpretation of the Stagirite, shown recently by Garin to have shared certain attitudes also expressed through Ficino's Platonism" (p. 647). Already in these cited lines there is an unsolved conflict between the devotional, evangelical, and not doctrinal or metaphysical or theological style on the one hand, and the humanistic philosophical background on the other. Such dichotomy simply does not work (and it is derived from Kristeller's problematic distinction between humanism and philosophy). Thus, Trinkaus' phrase *theologia rhetorica* misses both the humanists' critique of scholastic theology, and the alternative offered by humanist theology, which is not only rhetorical but also doctrinal. The doctrinal aspect of this new theology drew on the humanists' new perspective regarding the *studia divinitatis* (both patristic and scholastic theology and the Scriptures), and the *studia humanitatis* (both the new classical textual *corpora*, some of which was completely unknown in the Middle Ages, and the new methods of philology and history).

[247] *Ibid.*, f. 180^{v}: "Qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem in me manet et ego in eo. Chi mangia la mia carne et beve il mio sangue sta in me et io in lui cioe si conguignamento et con questo dignissimo sacramento…"

[248] *Ibid.*, f. 181^{r}.

[249] *Ibid.*, f. 181^{v}.

status as the translator of Scripture and the most influential and most widly read Church Father.

In this chapter I have tried to describe what humanist theology meant in practice by presenting a detailed analysis of several sermons, and by placing them in the context of the spiritual and political crisis of the Florentine city-state between the 1470s and 1490s. Three features have stood out: the consistent separation of the human from the divine on theological, ontological, and epistemological levels; the ability of religion, when practised through love and emotion, to help man bridge this gap and approach the divine; and the inseparability of religion and politics on the human level, where proper practice is essential for happiness both in this life and in the life to come. Although this textual *corpus* is not new, and it has been discussed in the scholarly literature, it has not yet been sufficiently recognized as embodying a new humanist theology. We still need to study in more detail its complicated relations with other aspects of humanism; its growing familiarity with, and dependence on, classical philosophy, literature, and history, including newly discovered texts; its diminishing dependence on patristic theology; and most importantly, its critique of scholastic theology. What I have done in this chapter is only a beginning; and a wider *corpus* of texts should be explored.

I would like to connect the discussion in this chapter to the next two chapters, on Ficino and Pico respectively, by arguing that *De Christiana religione* and the *Apologia* represent the theory, on a more speculative (as opposed to practical), and on a more consistent level, of the new humanist theology.

CHAPTER THREE

MARSILIO FICINO AND THE *CONDITIO RELIGIONIS*: "*QUANDIU DURAM ET MISERABILEM HANC FERREI SECULI SORTEM SUSTINEBIMUS?*"[1]

In this chapter I intend to place the theology of Ficino's *De Christiana religione* in the context of the spiritual crisis Florence was facing during the second half of the *Quattrocento*. I shall try to demonstrate—through an analysis of some parts of this text—that Ficino here lays the foundation for a new humanist theology. Ficino's sense of the crisis, as expressed in this work, is far wider than that of the professional theologian Caroli and of some of the preachers whom we have encountered in chapter two. For him, the crisis is all-embracing: it is a religious, a philosophical, and a political crisis, and these aspects of it cannot be separated.

Ficino himself has some claim to being a theologian, and he was ordained priest in the same year in which he wrote this book; but his theology is no longer the traditional scholastic or early humanist theology. He ignores scholastic and most of patristic theology (which the exception of Augustine, and occasionally Jerome and Origen), even in places where the subject of his discussion brings to mind scholastic and patristic sources. His classical background is wider and far more pervasive than that of Caroli and the preachers we have met in chapter two. Moreover, while they have used mainly Latin sources and Roman examples, Ficino uses predominantly Greek sources, many of them only recently discovered in the West. His theology—as should be clear from the title of his most important book, *Theologia platonica*—is deeply influenced by Plato and the Neoplatonists, to whose translation and interpretation in Latin he was to dedicate most of his life. Indeed, one can almost regard *De Christiana religione* as an attempt to create a theology in which Platonism, as Ficino sees it, would complement Christian truth, as revealed in Scripture, in the creation of a new concept of religion. To be more precise, this concept of religion—according to Ficino—was

[1] Marsilio Ficino, *De Christiana religione*, in *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, p. 1.

already present in a nuclear form in pre-Christian religion and reached its culmination in the earlier generations of Christianity. The nature of this new concept of religion will be expounded throughout this chapter.

This chapter is not a commentary on *De Christiana religione*. Such a commentary needs to be written, but this is not the place for it. Nor shall I analyse some chapters of this work, such as the long discussion of the Sibylline Oracles or the detailed disputations with Judaism and Islam. I shall concentrate on those chapters which present Ficino's own Christian theology.

I shall start with a more general discussion of the nature of *De Christiana religione*. Then I shall move on to a detailed analysis of parts of the Latin original, comparing them, where necessary, with the Italian translation.

1. *Some General Introductory Remarks*

Some clarification of the term "humanist theology" is needed in the context of Ficino's *De Christiana religione*. This theology is "humanistic" largely because of the great interest of its founder, Ficino, in Plato and the Neoplatonic tradition, which had been recently discovered in the West, in Greek and on an unprecedented scale, and the translation and dissemination of which was to form the centre of Ficino's life work.[2] This interest was expressed in terms of a *prisca theologia*, which was intended to replace the Aristotelian metaphysics that had played a dominant role in scholastic theology.[3] This concept reflected

[2] See the detailed discussion in James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Leiden 1990); especially vol. 1, pp. 267–359.

[3] On the *prisca theologia* see Walker, *The Ancient Theology*… especially the first two chapters; Ilana Klutstein, *Marsilio Ficino et la Theologie Ancienne. Oracles Chaldaïques, Hymnes Orphiques—Hymnes de Proclus* (Firenze 1987). A good account of the *prisca theologia* with more references is in Copenhaver, 'The Secret of Pico's Oratio…' pp. 59–60. See also Hankins, *Plato*… vol. 1, pp. 282–288; vol. 2, pp. 460–464; Allen, *Synoptic Art*… especially pp. 1–92. In this chapter I shall introduce another interpretation of Ficino's notion of ancient theology in his *De Christiana religione*. My interpretation is focused, first of all, on Ficino's unique notion of religion, and then on a different historical division. I shall thus try to show that *De Christiana religione* is not "… an explicitly apologetic work written after Ficino's admission to the priesthood and studiously avoids many of his characteristically Platonic ideas" (Allen, *Synoptic Art*… p. 42, n. 89), but rather an important work, written during the same time in which Ficino composed his *Platonic Theology*, and which contains some essential keys for understanding Ficino's theological and philosophical motivations. Thus, the interpretation presented in this chapter is

Ficino's interest in theology (also seen in his sermons and in his work on Platonic theology).[4] For him, theology proper should be founded on "moments of revelation" (the expression is mine): prophecies and miracles as in the Scriptures. Ficino introduced the idea of the ancient theology—which was based on the Chaldaic Oracles, the prophecies of the Sibyls, and Platonic truths—as a stage before Christian revelation; but he believed that the combination of religion and worldly wisdom personified by pagan figuers like Hermes and Orpheus, and in sacred history by Melchizedek, Moses and by Christ Himself, was necessary in his own time for reconnecting religion and politics.

If philosophy for Ficino represents the culmination of all human disciplines, and religion is the culmination of human civilization, it was 'ancient theology' which combined these two culminations to represent the perfection of humanity. This perfection derives from the fact

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quite far from Edgar Wind's influential evaluation of Ficino, in his *Pagan Mysteries* … p. 68: "… for however insistent he [Ficino] was in explaining the agreement of his philosophy with the Christian creed, he tried to infuse into Christian morals a kind of neo-pagan joy, for which the *passio amatoria* served as a model. It is in the positive revaluation of an impulse which Christian asceticism tended to scorn that Ficino revealed himself as a neo-pagan thinker." Without underestimating Ficino's originality and the break his thinking represented with regard to scholastic theology, I shall offer here another perspective of Ficino's synthesis between pagan philosophy and Christianity.

[4] We have a good indication regarding the way in which Ficino's theological discussions were regarded by contemporary professional scholastic theologians, through the reaction of a Dominican friar, Vincenzo Bandello da Castelnuovo, introduced and partly published by Paul Oskar Kristeller in his 'A Thomist Critique of Marsilio Ficino's Theory of Will and Intellect', in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume*, English section vol. II (Jerusalem 1965), pp. 463–494; see, e.g., p. 464: "The fact that this prominent Thomist took the trouble to refute Ficino in a lengthy treatise, and in a rather polite and respectful fashion, tends to show that Ficino was taken seriously by his scholastic contemporaries, and that they felt he was dealing, at least in part, with the same problems which were treated by themselves and by their own masters" (Bandello's full text was later published in Kristeller, *Le thomisme et la pensée italienne de la renaissance* (Montréal 1967), pp. 187–278). But still, as I shall try to show in this chapter, Ficino's theological discussions offered in fact an alternative to scholastic discussions, both in style and in contents. Ficino's notion of dialectic, discussed by Allen in his *Synoptic Art*… pp. 149–193, was presented by him also as an alternative; see, e.g., p. 191: "At the opposite pole from Valla's and Agricola's rhetoricism, it too presented a powerful alternative to the traditional logic of the schools, even for those who did not agree with Plato's presuppositions, given his objective idealist metaphysics, about the relationships of words to things." See also Hankins' 'Marsilio Ficino as a Critic of Scholasticism', in his *Humanism and Platonism*… vol. 2, pp. 459–469. Ficino's notion of theology, religion, and related terms in his *De Christiana religione*, as a foundation of a new humanist theology, are at the centre of the present chapter.

that this ancient theology was focused on one specific notion which was essential for Ficino: the eternity of the soul. This notion is what made this ancient theology—in which Plato was the central figure—so important. From Plato, the whole Neoplatonic tradition was developed, a philosophical and theological tradition in which the notion of the eternity of the soul was one of the basic doctrines, a doctrine which gave this tradition its unique profundity. Introducing this philosophical and theological tradition again to the declining Western Christian world meant for Ficino redirecting man towards the culmination of his humanity. But this, of course, is not the end or purpose of the Christian; Christianity offered something which is much beyond humanity: the salvation of the soul and eternal life. Here man needs these moments of revelation, prophecies and miracles, which represent both the border between the human and the divine, but, at the same time, by marking this border, they already signify the possibility of crossing it, since these revelationary moments represent a revival of the relation between man and God; they are realizations of revelation, and thus, realizations of the notion of divinity in human beings, which reached its total perfection in the figure of Christ.

The first question one should ask concerning Ficino and the spiritual crisis of the late *Quattrocento* is what was the significance of religion for Ficino. The answer is provided in this book. Religion was for Ficino what gave preeminence in nature to mankind. Without religion, there would be no difference between man and beast.

Ficino was concerned about the separation of religion from practical life. He was troubled by the lack of *profunditas* in contemporary religious and political life. As we shall see, for him, *profunditas* was a deep connection between religious ceremonies and other intellectual or political practices in civic life. The duty of priests and of the philosophers-kings was the same; they operated on two different but complementary levels. In fact, priests and philosophers should be the same individuals. To perform a religious ceremony means to act on a spiritual level for the salvation of souls. To govern a city-state means to act on a political level for the well-being of the citizenry. This demand for reunification of religion and politics stems from Ficino's new and very wide notion of the spiritual crisis and of the nature of religion.[5] Since religion is the main

[5] I agree with Hankins that we should not take the story regarding Ficino's youthful conversion from pagan philosophy and theology back to Christianity too seriously. It is difficult to prove that there was such a deep personal religious crisis, but, on the

characteristic of man, it should be the basis of any organic human society. It follows that there should be no separation between the practice of religion and the administration of the city, and that the same persons should be both religious and political leaders. One reason for the spiritual crisis has been the separation between these two spheres. Political leaders became detached from religion in Ficino's sense, and religious leaders and priests spent most of their time on performing empty rituals. It follows, although Ficino does not say this explicitly, that even when religious leaders took part in politics they did it in the same way as any other politicians, and did not understand the profound and unifying nature of religion as Ficino sees it.

This combination of the religious and political spheres desired by Ficino had, he believed, existed in ancient times; but now, in order to reach this state of *profunditas*, it was necessary to provide a new foundation to support both the religious and the political levels. Ficino bases his proposed foundation on two aspects of religion. The first is natural religion, *prisca religio*, which consisted of all pagan religions before Christianity and of some of the theological achievements of Greek philosophers, culminating in Plato.[6] This kind of religion was inspired by God in an indirect manner, since it represented man's yearning for the divine which is the highest and most characteristic part of his nature. The other aspect is represented by a religion based on direct divine intervention, the moments of revelation in the *Sacra Scriptura*, that is the revelation to Moses, the prophecies of the Hebrew prophets and, the highest point of this revelation, the word becoming flesh, God becoming man, and the miracles and prophecies of Christ and His disciples.

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other hand, tensions between pagan and Christian theology exist in almost every text of Ficino, certainly in *De Christiana religione*. These religious tensions are essential for understanding Ficino's philosophy, and as I have argued, we are facing the evolution of a new humanist theology which was the reaction to these religious tensions. On Ficino's spiritual crisis see Hankins, *Plato*… vol. 2, pp. 454–459. More relevant to the present discussion is Melissa Meriam Bullard's interpretation of Ficino's personal crisis as a crisis of values, and especially friendship, in the light of Ficino's complicated patronage relations with Lorenzo de' Medici during the 1470s and 1480s: 'Marsilio Ficino and the Medici. The Inner Dimensions of Patronage', in Verdon and Henderson [eds.], *Christianity and the Renaissance*… pp. 467–492. See also Riccardo Fubini, 'Ficino e i Medici all'avvento di Lorenzo il magnifico', in *Rinascimento* XXIV (1984), pp. 3–52; for another evaluation of Ficino's "paganism" see n. 20 on pp. 12–13.

[6] Compare with Ficino's commentary on the *Philebus* in Michael J.B. Allen [ed. and trans.], *Marsilio Ficino: The Philebus Commentary* (Los Angeles 1975), Introduction pp. 28–30; and see e.g., chapters 26 and 27 of book I, pp. 239–261. But there is no specific discussion of religion and the term is not mentioned there.

In a way, Judaism and Christianity were also expressions of man's natural bent for religion; but here God no longer left things to human nature and to human speculations. At this stage, God revealed himself through prophecies and miracles, and finally through the Incarnation.

Much of what I have said here, and many of my more detailed interpretations in the following sections, represent my own understanding of what Ficino does and my own interpretation of things which are not always clarified by him. *De Christiana religione* is not a highly systematic treatise in the scholastic or modern sense. It is written as a message, in a situation of spiritual crisis, intended to appeal to various types of readers (it was written and published both in Latin and Italian) representing all sections of Florentine society and of Christian society in general. There is a sense of urgency in this work which may explain the somewhat untidy organization of its various sections as well as the treatment of some themes (such as the nature of Christ's ministry) in different chapters and from different angles. Ficino does not provide new definitions even of basic terms like religion, which is the central theme of this work; but from his discussions one can construe some of his new religious and philosophical concepts, and one can establish connections between them. This does not amount to a full systematization of a work which is not written in a systematic manner. It implies simply that although the work is not presented in a strictly methodical manner, Ficino's thought on religion and Christianity is not fragmentary or confused. As will be seen in the following sections my analysis is closely based on passages of the text of this work, although I have reorganized the order of the discussion to some extent.

2. De Christiana religione*: The "Manifesto" of the New Humanist Theology*

Written in 1473–1474[7] and published two years later,[8] Ficino's *De Christiana religione* should be considered as a "manifesto" of the new humanist theology.

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[7] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 11: "Deinde usque ad nos annos iam mille et quadringentos septuagintaque et quatuor, invitis coelis, terrisque perdurat." See in the Italian version, *Della Christiana religione* (Firenze 1568), p. 49: "dipoi da Christo per infino a noi anni gia M.CCCC.LXXIII. dura contro alla forza del cielo et della terra."

[8] The first edition of the Latin version was published in Florence between Novem-

The choice of the title *De Christiana religione* is significant. The title which springs to mind in this context is *De doctrina Christiana*, Augustine's well-known and widely read work. We can mention for example in the mediaeval context two works with a similar title written before Ficino: *De Ecclesiasticis disciplinis et religione Christiana* by Regino, abbot of Prüm in Germany in the ninth century and *Quadragesimale de Christiana religione*, a group of Latin sermons by Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444), written between c. 1430–1436.[9] Regino's book was first printed in Paris in 1671, and it is doubtful whether Ficino knew of its existence. Bernardino was a well-known preacher who advocated reforms in the Catholic Church. Ficino may have known his work and may have been influenced by its title. Yet the choice of *religio* rather than Augustine's *doctrina* must reflect also Ficino's attitude to religion and the religious life. He is not dealing, as the scholastics did, with a set of doctrines, but with a wider concept of religion as the centre of the life of individuals and societies.

Ficino's text is divided into thirty-seven chapters with a short proem at the beginning.[10] Chapters 1–3 deal with religion in general and with the place of religion in man's life.[11] Chapters 4–23 try to show the superiority of Christianity and the Christian dogmas over other religions.[12] There are long and detailed discussions of Christ's human aspects, for instance, but hardly any mention, here or elsewhere in the

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ber 10 and December 10, 1476; the first edition of the Italian version was published in Florence probably before March 25, 1475. See Cesare Vasoli, *Quasi sit deus—studi su Marsilio Ficino* (Lecce 1999), p. 120.

[9] Regino, *De Ecclesiasticis disciplinis et religione Christiana* (Paris 1671). Regino's work is a collection of the right practices according to the Church's decisions, addressed to priests (the first book) and to all Christians (the second book). It contains no discussion of the concept of religion. Bernardino da Siena, *Opera omnia* (Firenze 1950), vols. 1–2. Bernardino's work is, both in its form and contents, a traditional scholastic discussion of the Christian faith and doctrines, divided into *sermones* and *articuli*. After mentioning in the proem, vol. 1, pp. 3–4, *religiositas* and its importance ("Nam totus et solus decor humanae vitae ipsa religiositas est"; "Religiositas enim custodit scilicet a culpa et a poena, iustificat autem cor per divinam gratiam, datque iucunditatem scilicet animi in praesenti, atque gaudium scilicet consummatae beatitudinis in futuro"), the work is focused mainly on the importance of the Christian faith and not on the concept of religion. His discussion of religion in vol. 1, pp. 181–191 is very different from Ficino's. Another work which can be mentioned here is Epiphanius' (c. 315–403) *Libellus de religione Christiana* which was translated into Latin by the humanist lawyer Pietro da Monte (d. 1457). See Stinger, 'Italian Renaissance…' p. 496.

[10] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… pp. 1–2.

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 4–26.

work, of scholastic theology or the Doctors of the Church.[13] Chapters 24–25 introduce the importance of the Sibyls and their testimonies of Christ.[14] Chapters 26–34 contain a theological discussion directed against the Jews, in which Ficino tries to demonstrate Christian dogmas by using Jewish sources in order to refute Judaism.[15] Chapters 35–37 return to the superiority of Christianity.[16]

As can be seen even from this short outline, this work of Ficino is far from being methodical or well-orgenized. In what follows, I shall break the order of the chapters and discuss Ficino's theology according to a number of themes and their subdivisions. Here are some of the themes to be discussed:

a. *Prisca religio* as a historical phenomenon.
b. *Prisca religio* as representing natural religion and pre-Christian divine inspiration.
c. Christianity as both a contrast and a sublimation of all early religions.
    1. The need for prophecies and miracles preformed by uneducated men in order to convert the world to Christianity.
    2. Educated pagans become Christians because of the supernatural character of the new Gospel. Later they discover that Christianity includes all that was best in natural religion, and adds to it the necessary supernatural elements.
d. Religion as both a diachronic and a synchronic phenomenon.
    1. Already in pre-Christian religion there is progress. Orpheus and Plato among the Greeks and Hermes among the Egyptians, as well as Moses among the Hebrews, represent stages in this progress.
    2. But in all these cases there was also the intervention of divine inspiration, where the superhistorical influences history. Even the pagan religious innovators enjoyed some divine inspiration; so much more so Moses and the Hebrew prophets, who were exposed to a proper—although as yet imperfect—divine revelation.

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[13] For Ficino's Latin scholastic sources see Kristeller, 'The Scholastic Background …' pp. 260–262. For his general attitude to scholasticism see Hankins, *Plato*… vol. 1, pp. 271–276.

[14] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… pp. 26–29.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 29–71.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 71–77.

3. Christianity is the culmination of the divine plan. God Himself becomes man in order to give mankind the true and perfect religion.
4. Since the emphasis in this final revelation was on the supernatural element which was missing in natural religion, Christian history begins with prophecies, miracles, and Paul's emphasis on faith and even on *stultitia crucis*.
5. But Christianity itself became institutionalized, miracles have diminished into an absolute minimum, religion declines from generation to generation and today we are living in the Iron Age when religion has become almost an empy ritual. This is one aspect of the spiritual crisis of Ficino's age.
6. Yet because of the superhistoric character of its founder and his revelation, Christianity is eternal. It does not share in the final destiny of merely human institutions which end up in degenaration and death. Its supernatural and superhistorical nature is a promise of renewal.
7. This renewal will embody within Christianity a return to the ancient model of the king-priest, represented in pre-Christian history by Hermes and Moses, and in Christianity by Christ himself, the priest-king Melchizedek, who unifies in his person religious and political leadership.

These are the main themes which recur in this work of Ficino. In discussing these themes I shall also emphasize Ficino's growing dependence on biblical and classical sources, including newly discovered classical texts; his limited references to the Fathers, essentially to Augustine and Origen; and the complete absence of the Doctors of the Church. The sources used by Ficino as well as the sources which he avoids are the building blocks of the new theology which he creates out of them.

a. Prisca religio *and its Divine Inspiration. Religion As the Characteristic of Man*

Ficino opens the Latin version—which was dedicated to Lorenzo de' Medici—with a proem in which he introduces a modified version of a well-known Neoplatonic myth. This Neoplatonic story concerns the eternity of Platonic truth, which revealed itself in stages to each succeeding generation: first the ancient poets, then Plato himself, and

finally Plotinus and the Neoplatonic tradition.[17] Yet Ficino's modification of this myth is very important:

> The eternal wisdom of God ordained that the divine mysteries, at least at the beginning of religion, should be treated only by those who were true lovers of the true wisdom.[18]

This original religion does not appear to be in Proclus' version of the myth. It is a single and universal religion, almost in the general sense of religiosity. It was in this ancient religion that God first, and indirectly, revealed the divine mysteries. This is where Ficino begins his version of *catena aurea*. What exactly was this beginning of religion? It seems that he is referring to a golden age characterized by purity and perfection,

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[17] See, e.g., the first lines of Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, in H.D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink [eds. and trans.], *Théologie platonicienne*, 6 vols. (Paris 1968–1997), vol. 1, pp. 5–7: "Ἅπασαν μὲν τὴν Πλάτωνος φιλοσοφίαν, ὦ φίλων ἐμοὶ φίλτατε Περίκλεις, καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκλάμψαι νομίζω κατὰ τὴν τῶν κρειττόνων ἀγαθοειδῆ βούλησιν, τὸν ἐν αὐτοῖς κεκρυμμένον νοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν ὁμοῦ τοῖς οὖσι συνυφεστῶσαν ταῖς περὶ γένεσιν στρεφομέναις ψυχαῖς, καθ' ὅσον αὐταῖς θεμιτὸν τῶν οὕτως ὑπερφυῶν καὶ μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν μετέχειν, ἐκφαίνουσαν, καὶ πάλιν ὕστερον τελειωθῆναι καὶ ὥσπερ εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἀναχωρήσασαν καὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν φιλοσοφεῖν ἐπαγγελλομένων καὶ τῆς τοῦ ὄντος θήρας ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι σπευδόντων ἀφανῆ καταστᾶσαν, αὖθις εἰς φῶς προελθεῖν· διαφερόντως δὲ οἶμαι τὴν περὶ αὐτῶν τῶν θείων μυσταγωγίαν ἐν ἁγνῷ βάθρῳ καθαρῶς ἱδρυμένην καὶ παρ' αὐτοῖς τοῖς θεοῖς διαιωνίως ὑφεστηκυῖαν ἐκεῖθεν τοῖς κατὰ χρόνον αὐτῆς ἀπολαῦσαι δυναμένοις ἐκφανῆναι δι' ἑνὸς ἀνδρός, ὃν οὐκ ἂν ἁμάρτοιμι τῶν ἀληθινῶν τελετῶν, ἃς τελοῦνται χωρισθεῖσαι τῶν περὶ γῆν τόπων αἱ ψυχαί, καὶ τῶν ὁλοκλήρων καὶ ἀτρεμῶν φασμάτων ὧν μεταλαμβάνουσιν αἱ τῆς εὐδαίμονος καὶ μακαρίας ζωῆς γνησίως ἀντεχόμεναι, προηγεμόνα καὶ ἱεροφάντην ἀποκαλῶν· οὕτως δὲ σεμνῶς καὶ ἀπορρήτως ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τὴν πρώτην ἐκλάμψασαν οἷον ἁγίοις ἱεροῖς καὶ τῶν ἀδύτων ἐντὸς ἱδρυνθεῖσαν ἀσφαλῶς καὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν εἰσιόντων ἀγνοηθεῖσαν, ἐν τακταῖς χρόνων περιόδοις ὑπὸ δή τινων ἱερέων ἀληθινῶν καὶ τὸν προσήκοντα τῇ μυσταγωγίᾳ βίον ἀνελομένων προελθεῖν μὲν ἐφ' ὅσον ἦν αὐτῇ δυνατόν, ἅπαντα δὲ καταλάμψαι τὸν τόπον καὶ πανταχοῦ ⟨τὰς⟩ τῶν θείων φασμάτων ἐλλάμψεις καταστήσασθαι. Τούτους δὴ τοὺς τῆς Πλατωνικῆς ἐποπτείας ἐξηγητὰς καὶ τὰς παναγεστάτας ἡμῖν περὶ τῶν θείων ὑφηγήσεις ἀναπλώσαντας καὶ τῷ σφετέρῳ καθηγεμόνι παραπλησίαν τὴν φύσιν λαχόντας εἶναι θείην ἂν ἔγωγε Πλωτῖνόν τε τὸν Αἰγύπτιον καὶ τοὺς ἀπὸ τούτου παραδεξαμένους τὴν θεωρίαν, Ἀμέλιόν τε καὶ Πορφύριον, καὶ τρίτους οἶμαι τοὺς ἀπὸ τούτων ὥσπερ ἀνδριάντας ἡμῖν ἀποτελεσθέντας, Ἰάμβλιχόν τε καὶ Θεόδωρον, καὶ εἰ δή τινες ἄλλοι μετὰ τούτους ἑπόμενοι τῷ θείῳ τούτῳ χορῷ περὶ τῶν τοῦ Πλάτωνος τὴν ἑαυτῶν διάνοιαν ἀνεβάκχευσαν, παρ' ὧν τὸ γνησιώτατον καὶ καθαρώτατον τῆς ἀληθείας φῶς τοῖς τῆς ψυχῆς κόλποις ἀχράντως ὑποδεξάμενος ὁ μετὰ θεοὺς ἡμῖν τῶν καλῶν πάντων καὶ ἀγαθῶν ἡγεμών, τῆς τε ἄλλης ἁπάσης ἡμᾶς μετόχους κατέστησε τοῦ Πλάτωνος φιλοσοφίας καὶ κοινωνοὺς ὧν ἐν ἀπορρήτοις παρὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ πρεσβυτέρων μετείληφε, καὶ δὴ καὶ τῆς περὶ τῶν θείων μυστικῆς ἀληθείας συγχορευτὰς ἀπέφηνε."

[18] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 1: "Aeterna Dei sapientia statuit divina mysteria, saltem in ipsis religionis exordiis, ab illis duntaxat tractati: qui veri essent verae sapientiae amatores."

in which true lovers of the true wisdom could be found. But what was so special about the beginning of religion?[19]

> For this reason it happened that among the ancients the same people investigated the reasons of things and carefully performed the sacrifices to the supreme cause itself of things, and that the same people were philosophers and priests in all nations.[20]

The combination of philosophers and priests is essential for Ficino. It signifies something ancient and common to all nations. It also signifies the central and unifying place of religion in the life of individuals and societies. This was the crucial aspect of the beginning of religion. But it signified something personal, too, since Ficino himself was both a philosopher and a Christian priest. I would suggest that this combination not only represented Ficion's views of religion but was also an endeavour to constitute his own new identity (since he had only recently been ordained) as a philosopher and a priest.[21] This interesting model could have originated in the mythological figures of Hermes Trismegistus or Melchizedek. Nevertheless, the combination was not an obvious one, and Ficino had to defend his description:

> For since the soul (as is the view of our Plato) is able to fly again to its celestial father and native land only by two wings, that is, the intellect and the will, and the philosopher especially relies on the intellect, [while] the priest relies on the will, and [since] the intellect illuminates the will, [while] the will kindles the intellect, those therefore who first discovered and reached divine things by means of their understanding, either by discovering [them] by their own efforts or by divine [inspiration], were [also] the first to worship divine things in the most correct way by

[19] When were those *exordia*? Is Ficino thinking of the pagan approach common in classical Greek and Latin poetry, according to which the first generation of men had direct contacts with the gods? Or is he thinking of the first generations of Adam and his descendants, to many of whom God speaks in the book of *Genesis*? In any case, neither pagan literature nor the Bible tell us that from the very beginnings of religion those who treated it were philosophers. In Augustine we find the idea of *religio* which was since the beginning of human race and contained certain truths, and *vera religio*, after the incarnation of Christ. See Augustine, *Retractationes* I, XIII: "Nam res ipsa, quae nunc christiana religio nuncupatur, erat et apud antiquos nec defuit ab initio generis humani, quousque ipse Christus veniret in carne, unde vera religio, quae iam erat, coepit appellari christiana."

[20] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 1: "Quo factum est, ut iidem apud priscos rerum causas indagarent, et sacrificia summae ipsius rerum causae diligenter administrarent, atque iidem apud omnes gentes philosophi, et sacerdotes existerent."

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2 (dedication to Lorenzo): "Marsilium Ficinum tuum sacerdotio, et quidem honorifice, decorasti."

> means of their will and to extend to others their correct worship and the reasons for it.[22]

The unity between the philosopher and the priest is essential since these two aspects of the ancient ruler complement each other. In the old Christian controversy concerning the relative importance of the intellect and the will, Ficino opts for an equal role for both of them

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 1: "Nam cum animus (ut Platoni nostro placet) duabus tantum alis, id est, intellectu, et voluntate possit ad coelestem patrem, patriam revolare, ac philosophus intellectu maxime, sacerdos voluntate nitatur, et intellectus voluntatem illuminet, voluntas intellectum accendat, consentaneum est qui primi divina per intelligentiam, vel ex se invenerunt, vel divinitus attigerunt, primos divina per voluntatem rectissime coluisse, rectumque eorum cultum rationemque colendi ad caeteros propagasse." The simile of the soul and its wings is taken from the myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*, which will be discussed by Ficino in his commentary on this dialogue. It is interesting that Ficino interprets this simile in terms of the intellect and the will, thus reconciling *intellectus* and *voluntas* in interpreting a newly discovered ancient myth and supporting his own reconstruction of ancient religion. The contrast between *intellegentia* and *voluntas* is as old as Augustine, but of course, it was given prominence in the debates between Thomists and Scotists. Augustine emphasizes three mental qualities in man: *memoria*, *intellegentia*, and *voluntas*, and distinguishes between them. One needs to understand a thing in order to remember and to want it, but understanding is distinct from memory and both are distinct from will. See *De trinitate* X, 11, 17–18; 12, 19. *Voluntas* both for the will of God and for the will of man appears hundreds of times in Augustine's works. Discussions of the relative importance of the intellect and the will were also conducted among scholastic theologians of Ficino's time and among some of the humanists, since Petrarch and Salutati. A general evaluation of the humanist's contribution to this issue, especially of Salutati, can be found in Charles Trinkaus' *In Our Image*… vol. 1, pp. 51–102, and his more general observations in *The Scope*… pp. 263–273. For more references see n. 90 in chapter two. What is significant in our passage is that no Christian authority, not even Augustine, is mentioned; that the intellect and the will are not rivals (the intellect belongs to the philosopher and the will to the priest) and that the discussion of the intellect and the will is anachronistically ascribed to the myth in Plato's *Phaedrus*. Plato is the only name mentioned in this passage, and this is not accidental. See also the discussion of the intellect/will controversy in Allen's introduction to his *Marsilio Ficino: The Philebus* … pp. 35–48. For another example of Ficino's discussion of the will and the intellect see his letter to Lorenzo de' Medici in Gentile [ed.], *Marsilio Ficino, Lettere I*… pp. 201–210; see especially the similar imagery on pp. 204–205: "Ceterum duo sunt anime actus circa Deum: videt enim Deum per intellectum ac Deo cognito gaudet per voluntatem. Visionem Plato vocat 'ambrosiam', gaudium 'nectar', intellectum vero et voluntatem geminas 'alas', quibus in Deum tanquam patrem et patriam revolemus. Iccirco puras, inquit, animas, cum in celum evolaverint in divina mensa ambrosia et nectare vesci. Gaudium in ea felicitate est prestantius visione, quia quanto magis apud Deum in hac vita meremur amando quam inquirendo, tanto maius in illa vita premium amori quam inquisitioni tribuitur. Meremur autem amando multo magis quam indagando multis de causis." For a contemporary critique of Ficino's discussion by Vincenzo Bandello da Castelnuovo see Kristeller, 'A Thomist Critique…' pp. 487–490; for an analysis of Bandello's style see pp. 469–470. As already mentioned in n. 4 above, the full text of Bandello was later edited by Kristeller in his *Le thomisme*… pp. 187–278; see also the

especially in social life. We remember that Ficino is describing here the whole of pre-Christian history. Those ancients came to know the divine things either by their own efforts or by divine inspiration. The term *divinitus*, is significant, since it implies that some of these pre-Christian philosopher-priests had moments of genuine revelation.[23] Ficino gives some examples to show the historical and cultural importance of the unity of philosophy and religion in different ancient civilizations: the Hebrews, the Persians, the Indians, the Egyptians, the Ethiopians, the Greeks, the Gauls, and the Romans.[24]

This unity of philosophy and religion with authority was also continued in early Christianity and the separation came only later in Church history:

> Who does not know how great and how true was the doctrine of the ancient Christian bishops and presbyters? O fortunate times, you preserved intact this divine connection of wisdom and religion, especially among the Hebrews and Christians. O such miserable times, finally,

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discussion on pp. 104–125. The complicated textual and contextual relations as well as the broader political and intellectual implications of Lorenzo de Medici's *L'Altercazione* or *De summo bono*, and Ficino's *Epistola de felicitate* and his *Oratio ad Deum Theologica* are discussed, with further references, in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism*… vol. 2, pp. 317–350. The differences, however, both in style and in contents, between Ficino's discussion and his Thomist critic, are a good example for the differences between a scholastic *Quaestio* and the new humanist theology. On this issue see my 'Vincenzo Bandello, Marsilio Ficino, and the Intellect/Will dialectic', in *Rinascimento* XLVI (2006), pp. 299–344. On the scholastic *Quaestio* see e.g., Brian Lawn, *The Rise and Decline of the Scholastic* '*Quaestio Disputata*' *With Special Emphasis on its Use in the Teaching of Medicine and Science* (Leiden 1993). See also in the next chapter n. 205.

[23] This is not to say that those ancients who *ex se invenerunt* these divine mysteries represent something like the later idea of natural religion. For Ficino, even this was part of a process initiated by *aeterna Dei sapientia*, the opening accord of this work.

[24] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 1: "Prophetae igitur Hebraeorum atque Essaei sapientiae simul, et sacerdotio incumbebant. Philosophi a Persis, quia sacris praeerant, magi, hoc est, sacerdotes, sunt appellati. Indi Brachmanas de rerum natura simul, atque animorum expiationibus consulebant. Apud Aegyptios Mathematici, et Metaphysici sacerdotio fungebantur et regno. Apud Aethiopas gymnosophistae philosophiae simul magistri erant ac religionis antistites. Eadem in Graecia consuetudo fuit sub Lino, Orpheo, Musaeo, Eumolpo, Melampo, Trophimo, Aglaophemo, atque Pythagora. Eadem in Gallia sub Druidum gubernaculis. Quantum apud Romanos Numae Pompilio, Valerio Sorano, Marco Varroni multisque aliis sapientiae simul, sacrorumque studium fuerit, quis ignoret?" One possible source is Diogenes Laertius I.1–12, but he does not include all the names which appear here. Is there another source, or is it a combination made by Ficino himself? Also, why omit the Chaldeans, or Babylonians or Assyrians, who usually appear in such lists? Could it be because the Chaldean Oracles enjoyed a special status as prophecies for the coming of Christianity? These are questions which should be dealt with by a commentator on this text.

> when the separation and miserable divorce of Pallas and Themis (that is, wisdom and divine law) happened. Alas, holiness was thus given to the dogs to tear to pieces.[25]

As we have seen in chapter one n. 171 and context, also Caroli, through Dominici's speech in Book three, emphasized the importance of wisdom for the government of religious institutions. There is a clear resemblance in tone between Ficino's and Caroli's critique of their times. In discussing early Christian religion, Ficino again uses the adjective *priscus*; but now it is in the context of οἱ πάλαι καὶ οἱ νῦν. The Neoplatonic myth and other classical elements are added to the Christian idea of the *Ecclesia primitiva*. This ancient Church still preserved the ancient unity of wisdom, religion, and leadership, both among the Hebrews and the Christians. What is interesting here is the double use of the word religion: it describes a specific religion—Christianity or Judaism—but it also describes a more general practice of man towards God—*cultus Dei*.[26]

As to the degeneration in the history of Christianity, which appears here in contrast to the fullness of the primitive Church, this is the theme which occupies Ficino in the next few sentences, but I shall deal with it in another section.

We learn more about Ficino's view of religion from the first part (chapters 1–3) of the Italian version of *De Christiana religione*.

The proem in this version is a more popular version of the first chapter of the *Theologia platonica*, in which religion replaces the notion of the eternity of the soul.[27] The idea of the miserable condition of

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[25] *Ibid.*: "Quanta denique et quam vera doctrina in priscis Christianorum episcopis, presbyterisque quis nesciat? O felicia secula, quae divinam hanc sapientiae, religionisque copulam, praesertim apud Hebraeos, Christianosque integram servavistis. O secula tandem nimium infelicia, quando Palladis, Themidisque (id est, sapientiae et honestatis) et separatio divortium miserabile contigit. Proh nephas, sic datum est sanctum canibus lacerandum." Even in the context of the early Church, Ficino uses two pagan godesses as symbols of characteristics of the Christians of the past. On the increasing dissatisfaction with Florentine political life during the 1470s, of men such as Ficino, Caroli, Landino, and Alamanno Rinuccini, see Bullard, 'Marsilio Ficino and the Medici…' pp. 480–481.

[26] In Greek, θρησκεία is used in the first sense and θρήσκευμα or λατρεία in the second.

[27] The title of the proem is: "Nel quale proemio si contiene, che la generatione humana senza Religione sarebbe piu misera che le bestie" (*Della religione Christiana*… p. 1); the title of the chapter is: "Si animus non esset immortalis, nullum animal esset infelicius homine" (*Theologia platonica*… vol. 1, p. 14). The analogy between religion and the immortality of the soul is plainly there in the text of Ficino. We remember that

mankind is explained in much more detail here, with examples of *corporis imbecillitas* and without all the names of ancient philosopers and schools.[28] Ficino uses simpler images to describe the condition of man on earth[29] and compares man to the heavenly spirits on account of his

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the myth of Plato's *Phaedrus* has just been mentioned. In it, the eternity of the soul is connected with the divine sphere. But the connection between the soul and religion is also clear in some places in Scripture. The 'portion of God from above' at Job 31, 2, has usually been interpreted to mean the soul. At John 3, 16, we have one version of the purpose of the Incarnation: "sic enim dilexit Deus mundum ut filium suum unigenitum daret ut omnis qui credit in eum non pereat sed habeat vitam aeternam." Even in many pagan texts, eternal life, or at least the blessings of eternal life, are preserved by the gods for the righteous: it is enough to mention the words of Cephalus in Book I of Plato's *Republic*. In the myths of Plato's *Republic* and *Gorgias* the judges in the underworld are divine. Ficino himself describes religion as *madre della viva speranza*: see n. 31 below.

[28] Ficino, *Della religione Christiana*… pp. 1–2: "Se l'humana generatione, la quale puo col lume dell'intelletto comprendere i gradi de'beni, et de'mali, et qualche volta discernere la vera felicità dalla vera miseria, et dalla falsa felicità, non aspettassi, dopo questa ombra di vita, vera vita: certamente nessuno animale nato sarebbe piu misero che l'huomo. Perche qualunque diligentemente considera l'ordine delle cose mondane, truova in verità, che la sorte et conditione de gl'huomini in terra è molto piu dura et aspra, che quella de gli altri animali. Prima il corpo nostro, perche è quasi di temperata complessione, nudo, tenero, senza armi naturali facilmente da qualunque estrema qualità et accidente, et ostacolo tutto'l giorno è offeso: et di cose quasi innumerabili quanto al vitto, vestito, habitatione, instrumenti, ha di bisogno. Dipoi la inquisitione della ragione, laquale nelle operationi, et opere ci dichiara essere piu eccellenti che'bruti, necessariamente ci fa in questa vita molto piu miseri"; *Theologia platonica*… vol. 1, pp. 14–16: "Cum genus humanum propter inquietudinem animi imbecillitatemque corporis et rerum omnium indigentiam duriorem quam bestiae vitam agat in terris, si terminum vivendi natura illi eundem penitus atque ceteris animantibus tribuisset, nullum animal esset infelicius homine. Quoniam vero fieri nequit ut homo, qui dei cultu propius cunctis mortalibus accedit ad deum, beatitudinis auctorem, omnino sit omnium infelicissimus, solum autem post mortem corporis beatior effici potest, necessarium esse videtur animis nostris ab hoc carcere discedentibus lucem aliquam superesse. At si lucem suam humanae mentes nequaquam respiciunt, 'clausae tenebris et carcere caeco' [Virgil, *Aeneid* VI, 734], unde saepenumero cogimur propriae divinitati diffidere, solvamus, obsecro, caelestes animi caelestis patriae cupidi, solvamus quamprimum vincula compedum terrenarum, ut alis sublati platonicis ac deo duce in sedem aetheream liberius pervolemus, ubi statim nostri generis excellentiam feliciter contemplabimur. Ceterum, ut evidenter appareat qua ratione potissimum mentes hominum mortalia claustra resolvere, immortalitatem suam cernere, beatitudinem attingere valeant, conabimur sequenti disputatione pro viribus demonstrare, praeter pigram hanc molem corporum qua Democritiorum, Cyrenaicorum, Epicureorum consideratio finiebatur, esse efficacem qualitatem aliquam atque virtutem ad quam Stoicorum Cynicorumque investigatio sese contulit." Ficino could have found this information in various passages in the philosophical writings of Cicero and Seneca, or perhaps even Augustine. I have not been able to trace a source.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 2: "Ansio troppo et infelice è l'huomo in terra collocato dalla natura in una nebbia mezza tra giorno et notte."

rational nature.[30] He emphasizes themes which will be discussed later in the text, such as religion and the worship of God as the source of living hope (obviously of eternal life), of consolation and of all virtues and excellences,[31] and introduces his aims in writing this text: to confirm and defend Christianity as the true religion.[32] It is here that Ficino explains his reason for translating the work into the vernacular:

> Since religion is a common gift and virtue, it belongs to everyone; it therefore seemed to me suitable to compose the above-mentioned book not only in Latin but also in Italian, so that a book on a universal virtue would be common to many.[33]

This is one of the first occasions when a humanist publishes a speculative work in the vernacular, and it is not surprising that he feels the need to explain it. Religion is not like philosophy, for instance, in which purely theoretical discussions take place. In religion, the questions which need to be discussed concern matters of life and death, and such questions are common to everyone. Ficino's awareness of the need to translate and disseminate this book is part of the new humanist theology, in which dissemination played an important role, as we have seen in the chapter on humanist sermons.

Immediately in the first lines of the first chapter of *De Christiana religione*, Ficino states that religion is what gives preeminence in nature to mankind and that this striving upwards towards God the king of heaven (which can be regarded as the motive force of every religion) is as natural to mankind as neighing or barking are to horses or dogs.[34] Here

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[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3: "Non è ragionevole, che la ragione, la quale ci dimostra piu prestanti, che gli animali irrationali: et piu simili et propinqui nel vedere et volere a gli spiriti celesti pieni di ragione: ci facci piu distanti da quegli, che le bestie nella conditione del vivere, et nel grado del bene."

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 3: "Non è giusta cosa che la generatione humana accostandosi per il culto divino molto a Dio: il quale è somma felicità: sia sempre piu infelice che i bruti animali: i quali essendo di tal culto privati, da Dio son molto distanti"; "Questa beatitudine ci promette et dona la santa Religione madre della viva speranza: madre della vera consolatione, d'ogni virtu et sublimità et premio."

[32] *Ibid.*: "Dapoi che solamente nella sacra Religione ogni nostro bene si truova, debbesi nel l'osservantia et confermatione, et difensione di questa tutte le forze dello ingegno operare. Per laqual cosa volendo el tuo Marsilio Ficino usare l'ufficio suo al meno in qualche parte, hà in questo anno composto con l'aiuto divino un libro in confermatione et difensione della vera Religione, quale è la Christiana."

[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4: "Et perche la Religione è dote et virtu comune, a tutti appartenente: mi parve si convenisse detto libro non solo in lingua Latina, ma ancora in Toscana comporre: perche il libro della virtu universale a molti fusse comune."

[34] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 2: "Singulas generis humani dotes videmus in

Ficino is discussing the natural pre-revealed religion, that is, religion as a consequence of man's natural upward drive, *erectio* or *elevatio*, which is expressed through *cultus divinus*. *Erectio* may look like a translation of the Neoplatonic term ἀναφορά;[35] but, despite the similarity in the expression "God the king", ἀναφορά is the abstract action of the metaphysician referring everything back to God, while *erectio* is an action of the soul raising itself upwards towards God the king of heaven, just as the human body stands erect, facing upwards towards heaven.[36] Religion therefore occupies a central place in the life of man:

> Man, the most perfect animal, by this quality [religion] especially is both capable of perfection and differs from inferior things; by it he is connected to the most perfect things, i.e., divine ones. And conversely, if man, as man, is the most perfect among mortal animals, it is chiefly because of this quality that he is the most perfect [animal] of all; he himself regards it as his special [quality] which is not common to the rest

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bestiis quibusdam saltem secundum quandam similitudinem excepta religione, aliquando apparere. Nullum bruta prae se ferunt religionis indicium, ut propria nobis sit mentis in Deum coeli regem erectio, sicut corporis in coelum erectio propria, cultusque divinus, ita ferme hominibus naturalis, quemadmodum equis hinnitus, canibusque latratus." I have italicized some differences in the Italian version, *Della religione Christiana* … p. 9: "*Le sperientia naturale ci mostra*, che *tutte* le doti dell'huomo, eccetto la Religione, almeno secondo qualche similitudine, nelle bestie qualche volta appariscono. Ma nessuno inditio di Religione le bestie mai in se dimostrono: si che a noi resta proprio la elevatione della mente inverso d'Iddio, e del Cielo. Cosi come l'habito del corpo ritto in verso il Cielo a noi è proprio: et il culto divino quasi cosi a gl'huomini è naturale, come *a gli uccelli è il volare*." See also Trinkaus' discussion of parallel passage in *Theologia platonica* in his *In Our Image*… vol. 2, pp. 497–498. Compare with Augustine's notion of *rationalis anima* as what gives preeminence in nature to man in *De doctrina Christiana* I, XXII, 20: "Magna enim quaedam res est homo, *factus ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei*, non in quantum mortali corpore includitur, sed in quantum bestias rationalis animae honore praecedit." Ficino's critique of previous answers to the question of the preeminence of mankind in nature, as well as his own solution, is repeated and discussed also in book XIV, chapter IX, of his *Platonic Theology*. See Ficino, *Theologia platonica*… vol. 4, pp. 290–298; especially pp. 292–296. See also James Hankins' discussion in his 'Religion and the Modernity of Renaissance Humanism', in Angelo Mazzocco [ed.], *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism* (Leiden 2006), pp. 137–153; especially pp. 147–148.

[35] See, e.g., Georgius Gemistos Plethon, *De differentiis*, in B. Lagarde, 'Le '*De differentiis*' de Pléthon d'après l'autographe de la Marcienne', in *Byzantion* XLIII (1973), pp. 312–343, at p. 342: "Πῶς γὰρ οὐ περὶ τὰ μέγιστα ἁμαθὴς Ἀριστοτέλης, συχνῶν τε ἄλλων ὧν ἔφαμεν ἕνεκα καὶ μάλιστά τε καὶ μεγίστου, τῆς τῶν ἀϊδίων οὐσιῶν οὐ παραγωγῆς, οὐδ' ἐφ' ἓν τῶν πάντων τοῦ γε εἶναι ἕνεκα ἀναφορᾶς, οὐχ ὥσπερ Πλάτων τὲ καὶ οἱ περὶ Πλάτωνα τὸν πάντων βασιλέα θεὸν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐφιστάντες, τοῦτον παραγωγὸν τὲ παραγωγῶν καὶ δημιουργὸν δημιουργῶν ἀξιοῦσιν εἶναι, οὐδὲν ὅ τι οὐκ ἐπ' ἐκεῖνον ἀναφέροντες."

[36] *Erectio* in this sense is not scriptural. See references to classical, patristic, and mediaeval sources in Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, Eckhard Kessler, and Jill Kraye [eds.], *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge 1988), p. 311, n. 55.

> of them. This [quality] is religion; therefore, it is on account of religion [that man] is most perfect.[37]

Religion here is treated as a natural and unique quality of man, which makes him the most perfect animal. But what if anything goes wrong with this quality?

> If religion were to be empty, man would, in turn, on account of it, be the most imperfect of all [animals], since, on account of it, man would be the most foolish and miserable [animal].[38]

How can religion be empty? In one sense, this may mean that 'religion' in this sentence refers only to the practical constituent of religion: empty rituals which have become routine. But a comparison with the opening lines of the first chapter of his *Theologia platonica*, entitled: *si animus non esset immortalis, nullum animal esset infelicius homine*, may provide another answer:

> If, therefore, religion (as we said) is empty, there is no animal more foolish and miserable than man; and so, because of religion, man would be the most imperfect [animal] of all, and yet by virtue of it, he has just a little earlier seemed to be more perfect than all [animals].[39]

> Since mankind, because of the restlessness of our soul and the weakness of our body and our need for all things, lives on earth a harder life than beasts; if exactly the same end of life were attributed to man as to the rest of the animals, there would be no animal more miserable than him.[40]

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[37] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 2: "homo perfectissimum animal, ea proprietate maxime tum perfectione pollet, tum ab inferioribus discrepat, qua perfectissimis, id est, divinis coniungitur. Rursus, si homo animalium mortalium perfectissimus est, in quantum homo, ob eam praecipue dotem est omnium perfectissimus, quam inter haec habet ipse propriam, caeteris animalibus non communem, ea religio est, per religionem igitur est perfectissimus." We can find the idea regarding the unique place of the human soul and human beings in nature with regard to their relations with the gods e.g., in Xenophon, *Memorabilia* I, 4, 13: "τίνος γὰρ ἄλλου ζώου ψυχὴ πρῶτα μὲν θεῶν τῶν τὰ μέγιστα καὶ κάλλιστα συνταξάντων ᾔσθηται ὅτι εἰσί; τί δὲ φῦλον ἄλλο ἢ ἄνθρωποι θεοὺς θεραπεύουσι;" And see also the same idea with regard to cities, nations, and ages in I, 4, 16: "Οὐχ ὁρᾷς, ὅτι τὰ πολυχρονιώτατα καὶ σοφώτατα τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων, πόλεις καὶ ἔθνη, θεοσεβέστατά ἐστι, καὶ αἱ φρονιμώταται ἡλικίαι θεῶν ἐπιμελέσταται;"

[38] *Ibid.*: "Si religio esset inanis, per eam rursus homo omnium esset imperfectissimus, quoniam per eam dementissimus esset, atque miserrimus."

[39] *Ibid.*: "Si ergo religio, (ut diximus) vana est, *nullum est animal dementius et infelicius homine*, esset igitur ob religionem homo imperfectissimus omnium, per eam tamen paulo ante omnibus perfectior apparebat."

[40] Ficino, *Theologia platonica*… vol. 1, p. 14: "Cum genus humanum propter inquietudinem animi imbecillitatemque corporis et rerum omnium indigentiam duriorem quam bestiae vitam agat in terris, *si terminum vivendi natura illi eundem penitus atque ceteris animantibus tribuisset, nullum animal esset infelicius homine.*" Compare this expression to I Cor

It appears that the emptiness of religion in our passages from *De Christiana religione* means the lack of hope of an eternal life. This would render religion itself meaningless. What, then, is Ficino's solution in the *Theologia platonica* to the miserable *conditio humana* on earth? Since only after the body's death can man become blessed, it is necessary that some light should be left to human beings when they depart from this earthly prison.[41]

By means of this comparison we can see why *religio* in *De Christiana religione* is the counterpart of *immortalitas animi* in the *Theologia platonica* (the full title is: *Theologia platonica de immortalitate animorum*). Lacking either *religio* or *immortalitas animi*, man becomes the most miserable creature on earth. The aim of religion is thus for Ficino the immortality of the soul. This idea is also at the centre of his favourite philosophical school: the Neoplatonic tradition: see for example the very last chapter of Plotinus' last *Ennead*. This tradition, which Ficino used for constructing much of his *prisca theologia*, represents for him the wisdom mentioned above. But the same element of human nature cannot be a cause both of the most imperfect and the most perfect condition of man.[42] Ficino answers this question by distinguishing between *vana religio* and its opposite, *religio vera*, whose main object is God.[43] So far, the idea of religion being peculiar to human nature might be interpreted almost in the sense of natural religion. But Ficino would not allow his readers to make this mistake. By combining what appears to be the Stoic concept

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15, 16–19: "Nam si mortui non resurgunt, neque Christus resurrexit; quod si Christus non resurrexit, stulta est fides vestra, adhuc estis in peccatis vestris. Ergo et, qui dormierunt in Christo, perierunt. *Si in hac vita tantum in Christo sperantes sumus, miserabiliores sumus omnibus hominibus.*" Paul emphasizes the importance of the idea of the resurrection of the dead. Ficino replaces it with the idea of the eternity of the soul, but he uses the same Pauline rhetoric. See also the remarks of Garin in his 'La "teologia" ficiniana', in *Archivio di filosofia umanesimo e machiavellismo* (Padova 1949), pp. 1–12. Compare with Ficino's letter to Benedetto Colucci entitled: *Homo sine religione bestiis est infoelicior*, in *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, p. 647.

[41] *Ibid.*: "Quoniam vero fieri nequit ut homo, qui dei cultu propius cunctis mortalibus accedit ad deum, beatitudinis auctorem, omnino sit omnium infelicissimus, solum autem post mortem corporis beatior effici potest, necessarium esse videtur animis nostris ab hoc carcere discedentibus lucem aliquam superesse."

[42] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 2.: "Non potest autem per eandem sui partem ita contraria pati, ut secundum eam tum summe perfectus sit, tum summopere imperfectus."

[43] *Ibid.*: "Est igitur religio vera, praesertim quia sicut non potest quicquam ignis propinquatione fieri frigidissimum, ita non potest homo, quia solus haeret Deo sapientissimo beatissimoque, stultissimus ex hoc, miserrimusque evadere. Neque etiam potest Deus, qui summa veritas et bonitas est, humanum genus prolem suam decipere."

of *communis opinio* with the idea of God as the origin of such opinions, he reminds us that even that distinct part of human nature was created by God.[44] God is responsible—according to a proverb (*vaticinium* is closer to opinion or proverb than to prediction; but the Italian version reads *divinatione*)[45]—for every species in nature, as well as for their different instincts.[46] Ficino now returns to man and religion:

> Also by the common religious feeling of people [there] is true religion, since all [men] always and everywhere worship God for the sake of the future life.[47]

Here we may have the connecting link between religion as unique to man in *De Christiana religione* and life after death as unique to man in the *Theologia platonica*. Since this true religion is natural to man, and we have seen that it was implanted in him by God, one can indeed be sure of the religious truth of a future life:

> It is thus true that God cares for us and that there will be another life, if indeed the most perfect species among animals holds this most true judgment which is most natural to him among all [animals].[48]

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[44] *Ibid.*: "Naturalis autem communisque opinio de Deo inserta nobis est a Deo communi origine ac principe naturarum." *Communis opinio* of all nations as a proof for the existance of the gods is a Stoic idea: see e.g., Cicero, *De natura deorum*, II, 4–12. But for the Stoic such an opinion (ἔννοια) is implanted in man by nature. Here Ficino Christianizes this idea: it is God, the author of all natures, who has inserted into our minds the idea of religion as unique to man. The expression *a Deo communi origine ac principe naturarum* may well indicate a silent Christian correction to the Stoic idea that nature herself is the origin of our common ideas.

[45] Ficino, *Della religione Christiana*… p. 11.

[46] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 2: "Praeterea meminisse debemus vaticinium illud, quod a tota aliqua animalium specie fit, quia universalis, particularisque naturae fit instinctu, verum existere. Reptilia multa, oriente sole, e terrae sinu surrepunt, aeris caligo portenditur, cornicum plurima turba vespere a certa aeris plaga pervolat, venti praenunciantur, et alia eiusdem generis innumerabilia." Perhaps we have here some distant echoes of Seneca's Letter 91.

[47] *Ibid.*: "Communi quoque hominum vaticinio religio vera est, omnes namque semper ubique colunt Deum, vitae futurae gratia." *Vaticinium* usually means prophecy and, in a borrowed sense, poetry. But here it seems parallel to *iudicium* in the next note. Since Ficino claims (n. 44) that this is an opinion implanted in us by God and nature, one is tempted to translate it as inspiration, but that would imply a moment of inspiration of the sort so important to Ficino, while here he is speaking of a permanent sentiment. I have therefore translated it, with some hesitation, as "religious feeling". Compare with *Della religione Christiana*… p. 11: "Non altrimenti per uno comune indovinare de gl'huomini la Religione è vera, et quest è che tutti et sempre et in ogni luogo honorono Iddio per cagione della futura vita."

[48] *Ibid.*: "Verum est igitur providere nobis Deum, et vitam aliam fore, si modo

This natural tendency not only seems to be implanted in man alone (of all animals), but also to be an unchangeable and common element, in comparison with all the changeable opinions, affections, manners, and laws of men.[49] It is important to note that Ficino does not use logical arguments and syllogisms as one would have expected to find in a scholastic discussion of such a theme. He prefers the commonly held opinion or religious feeling, a historical fact, as the starting-point for his discussion, and the only inference we find here is that even such a historical fact should be ascribed to God's first act of intervention in history, the creation of human nature. Ficino concludes this first chapter with his own variation on a remote echo of an Aristotelian motif:

> If therefore someone is found to be completely without religion, since this is contrary to the nature of mankind, either he is some sort of monster from birth, or he was defiled by the contagion of another monster.[50]

As we have seen, God is always and everywhere the object of religion. Religion is natural and common to the whole of mankind and, as such, it can or should unify different human beings. In the second chapter,[51] (entitled: *De divinitate animi a religione*), Ficino turns to the divine ele-

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perfectissima species animalium verissimum habet iudicium illud, quod sibi est maxime omnium naturale."

[49] *Ibid.*: "Talem autem esse religionis assertionem apparet, non solum ex eo, quod solius omnisque hominis est, verum etiam ex eo quod omnes hominum opiniones, affectus, mores, leges, excepta communi quadam religione, mutantur." Here we have again the Stoic idea of *communis opinio*, κοινὴ ἔννοια, and *consensus omnium gentium* of the first sections of *De natura deorum* II. But the special immutable nature of religion is also reminiscent of the Stoic idea of natural law expounded by Cicero in Book I of *De legibus*. This idea of a natural or divine law which is not subject to change may have helped Ficino in forming this idea of *vera religio*.

[50] *Ibid.*: "Siquis ergo reperiatur omnis religionis penitus expers, quia praeter humanae speciei naturam est, vel monstrum quoddam est ab initio, vel contagione monstri alterius inquinatus." See Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 2, 1253a1–4: "ἐκ τούτων οὖν φανερὸν ὅτι τῶν φύσει ἡ πόλις ἐστί, καὶ ὅτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον, καὶ ὁ ἄπολις διὰ φύσιν καὶ οὐ διὰ τύχην ἤτοι φαῦλός ἐστιν, ἢ κρείττων ἢ ἄνθρωπος." This was later interpreted and supplemented: the man without a polis is either a God or a beast. Ficino turns Aristotle's man without a polis into a man without religion. The implication is that religion for Ficino is analogous to the polis for a representative Greek political thinker like Aristotle. Just as Aristotle could not contemplate human life outside the polis, Ficino cannot contemplate human life outside religion. Moreover, just as for Aristotle the polis is the highest and most general framework of human life, so, for Ficino, is religion.

[51] *Ibid.*

ment in man by paraphrasing Plato's *Protagoras* 322a3–4.[52] But Ficino moves on, immediately within the same sentence and without any indication, to describe what seems to be the relations between Christians and God, represented by a series of verbs: *Deum* ***recognoscimus***, *et* ***cupimus***, *tanquam authorem* ***invocamus***, *et* ***amamus*** *ut patrem, ut regem* ***veneramur***, ***timemus*** *ut Dominus*. To love God as a father and to be fearful of him as a master is very far from Plato and the Greeks. It may have been very difficult for Ficino's reader to know where Plato ended and Christianity began.[53] The reader may indeed have thought that Plato in the *Protagoras* actually said all of this; but I do not think that this was Ficino's purpose. His aim, rather, was to use Plato's authority as a new *praeambulum fidei* for his humanist theology. Significantly, Ficino does not mention or quote any other philosopher or any Father or Doctor of the Church on this important issue. He then moves on to prove God's existence from its effect, i.e., from the notion of God which we have.[54] This is not a proof in the scholastic sense but merely an argument from analogy: just as in sense-peception we do not feel

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[52] "Επειδὴ δὲ ὁ ἄνθρωπος θείας μετέσχε μοίρας, πρῶτον μὲν διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ συγγένειαν ζῴων μόνον θεοὺς ἐνόμισεν…" ("since man was a partaker of a divine portion, he, in the first place, on account of his kinship with God, was the only creature who worshipped the gods"). Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 2: "Plato noster in Protagora, maximum esse vult nostrae divinitatis indicium, quod soli nos in terris tanquam sortis divinae participes ob cognationem quandam…" ("our Plato in *Protagoras* thinks that the best sign of our divinity is that only we on earth are like participants in divine destiny because of a certain kinship").

[53] A reader of the Italian version would have had the same problem; see *Della religione Christiana*… p. 12: "Platone nostro nel libro titolato Protagora dice essere grande inditio di nostra divinità: che noi soli in terra, come partecipi di sorte divina, per una certa propinquità riconosciamo et desideriamo Iddio, come autore: invochiamo et lo amiamo, come padre; come Re lo veneriamo, temiano come Signore." Plato represents here the ancient Greek and Roman rationalistic and optimistic conception regarding the harmony between man and the gods, as opposed to the biblical, more pessimistic approach, doubting man's capacity of understanding the divine will and commands. Since the Septuagint was not read by Greek and Roman authors until later period, these two approaches have long existed without affecting each other. On the other hand, this does not mean that the ancient Greeks were unaware of irrational impulses. See the detailed discussion in Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will*… especially the first two chapters.

[54] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… pp. 2–3: "Sicut enim Sol sine Sole non cernitur, et sicut aer sine aere non auditur, ac plenus lumine oculus videt lumen, plena aere auris audit aerem resonantem, ita neque Deus sine Deo cognoscitur." Here Ficino makes another step forward. He has already shown, using the Stoic idea of *notiones* (ἔννοιαι), that the notion of God is so common among all nations that it must be implanted in us by God Himself. This, as we have seen, is an argument which he adopted from Cicero's *De natura deorum*. Here he uses what appears to be his own argument from analogy.

the wind and the sun without there being a wind or a sun, so in matters of opinions or judgments there can be no notion of God without there being a God. The next step is that the soul is full of God, and to the extent that it has been raised towards God, it has been illuminated by divine light and therefore recognizes God.[55] But the soul cannot reach such heights by itself; it needs some power from above, and only then will it be lifted and become God's temple, as Xystus the Pythagorean thinks, and he believes that the temple of the eternal true God will never fall into ruin.[56] We are faced here once again with a combination of Christianity and Neoplatonic or Pythagorean imagery. For such an idea, that the soul is full of God and raises itself towards him, one would have expected some Christian authority, or even some verses from the Psalms; what we get is the authority of an obscure Pythagorean. Ficino ends this chapter with a passage which shows that man's yearning towards God must be reciprocated by God Himself:

> The human mind pursues God every day; the heart is inflamed with God; the chest breathes God; the tongue sings the praises of God; the head, the hands, and the knees worship Him; the works of men refer to God. If God does not hear these things, He is ignorant; if He does not perceive, He is ungrateful; [and He is] entirely cruel, if He compels us to cry out every day [but] does not hear us. But God, who is endless wisdom, goodness, [and] splendour cannot be either ignorant, or ungrateful, or cruel. Since, however, a superior mind entirely compre-

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 3: "Sed animus Deo plenus, tantum in Deum *erigitur*, quantum et divino lumine illustratus agnoscit Deum…" *Erigitur* is, of course, the verb from which *erectio* is derived: see n. 36. Compare with *Della religione Christiana*… p. 12: "Ma l'animo pieno d'Iddio tanto in verso d'Iddio *si lieva*, quanto dal lume divino illustrato riconosce Iddio …"

[56] *Ibid.*: "Non enim ad id quod supra est et infinitum, nisi virtute superioris, infinitique *attollitur*, hinc animus Dei templum efficitur, ut Xistus Pythagoricus arbitratur, Dei veri aeterni templum nunquam existimat ruiturum." *Attollitur* here expresses the same idea as *erigitur* in the previous note. See *Della religione Christiana*… pp. 12–13: "… perche non *s'eleva* a colui che è sopra lui et infinito, se non per la virtu di chi è superiore et infinito. Di qui l'anima si fa tempio d'Iddio, come Sisto Pithagorico stima, il quale dice, il tempio dello eterno Iddio mai non dovere rovinare…" 'Xystus the Pythagorean' is a reference to a book of *Sententiae* which was current in Latin throughout the Middle Ages. The extant Greek original is called Σέξτου γνῶμαι, and was ascribed by Jerome to a Pythagorean called Sextus; but Rufinus, who translated it into Latin, ascribed it to the third century pope Sixstus II. Ficino probably had a text which conflated these two pieces of information about the author. On this Sextus see *Der kleine Pauli* 5, p. 158. See also Augustine, *De natura et gratia*, PL 44, p. 285: "Quis item christianus ignorat, quod beatissimum Xystum Romanae Ecclesiae episcopum et Domini martyrem dixisse commemorat…" I would like to thank Prof. Michael J.B. Allen for this reference.

> hends a lower one, rather than vice versa, if the human mind reaches the divine mind, it is necessary for the human [mind] to be comprehended and governed by the divine mind.[57]

All this may appear like going in a circle. The notion of religion is so natural that its source must be God, but at the same time the existence of this notion shows that God exists. But we have seen that Ficino uses different types of argument for each of these conclusions. The last passage quoted confirms the need for religion as something required by God Himself. Here Ficino introduces some of the Christian qualities of God: *infinita sapientia, bonitas, claritas* as if they followed naturally from man's concept of God. This appears to be part of the tension between the natural arguments in support of religion as common to all men and the true conception of God revealed by Christianity. If we regard this issue purely in terms of human history, it is clear that only the ancient Hebrews and the Christians have recognized such qualities of the one true God; but our last passage does not regard the problem from the point of view of human action, but from the point of view of divine grace, and Ficino is therefore justified in considering God on the basis of true religion.

Even in this period of *prisca religio*, which came to man naturally by divine dispensation, there were men who disobeyed divine laws and, even worse, those who rebelled against God himself. This is how Ficino puts it in the fourth chapter:

> There is nothing more displeasing to God than to be despised, nothing more pleasing than to be worshipped; [God] punishes human beings who are transgressors against any part of the divine laws less severely, but He strikes down with a thunderbolt from His kingdom [those who] rebel on account of [their] ingratitude, malignity, and pride.[58]

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[57] *Ibid.*: "Deum agitat mens humana quotidie, Deo ardet cor, Deum suspirat pectus, eundem cantat lingua, eundem caput, manusque adorant, et genua, eundem referunt hominum artificia. Si non audit haec Deus, est ignorans, si non exaudit, ingratus, crudelis omnino, si vociferari nos compellit quotidie, quos non exaudit. Deus autem, qui infinita sapientia, bonitas, claritas est, ignorans, vel ingratus, vel crudelis esse non potest. Omnino autem cum superior mens comprehendat inferiorem potius, quam econverso, si mens humana mentem divinam attingit, necessarium est a divina mente humanam comprehendi et gubernari." Compare with the emphasis on the daily-base (*quotidie* or *de die in diem*) relation between man and God in Ficino's *Theologia platonica* … vol. 4 (book XII), e.g., pp. 22, 28, 54, 76, and the references to II Cor 4, 16, and to Augustine's *De vera religione* in nn. 33 and 73, on pp. 344 and 346.

[58] Ficino, *De Christiana* religione… p. 4: "Nihil Deo magis displicet quam contemni, nihil placet magis quam adorari, homines divinarum legum aliqua ex parte transgres-

Divine providence does not permit any epoch or place to be completely without religion, although it does allow many types of worship.[59] The one negative example given here is that of Alexander the Great.[60] Although Alexander never refused any form of worship of himself, he did it out of human weakness rather than out of pure pride. The implication is that, although he was prepared to be worshipped as a God, he was careful not to overdo this worship. Yet the very fact that he was willing to be worshipped is an example of a sin with which Ficino will deal in his criticism of his contemporary Christians, the classical Latin *miscere humana divinis*. The importance of true worship of God is that it signifies for human beings the border between humanity and divinity. Rebellion against God means crossing this border. Those who do so should expect serious punishment as the enemies of God.[61] Those who truly worshipped God are Christ and His disciples, together with those who follow their example:

> Those, therefore, above all others—indeed, those alone—sincerely worship God who earnestly revere Him by means of action, goodness, speaking the truth, [and] clarity of the mind, as much as they can, and with [Christian] love, as much as they owe. Such men are indeed, as we shall show, those who worship God, as Christ the instructor of life and His disciples taught.[62]

This is the first mention of Christ in the treatise. Christ and his disciples exemplified a pure and perfect way of worshipping God. They are presented here as models for such worship in what is still a continuation of a discussion of religion as natural to man. The nature of Apostolic religion as a revolution in the history of religion as well as its culmination is Ficino's next theme, which I shall discuss in a later section.

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sores levius punit, Rebellantes autem per ingratitudinem, malignitatemque et superbiam, ab eius imperio fulminat."

[59] *Ibid.*: "Idcirco divina providentia non permittit esse aliquo in tempore, ullam mundi regionem omnis prorsus religionis expertem, quamvis permittat variis locis atque temporibus, ritus adorationis varios observari."

[60] *Ibid.*: "Rex Alexander quot Gentibus imperabat, tot modis, cum vel ipse ad eas proficisceretur, vel legatos mitteret, honorabatur. Totumque id quod in eius agebatur gloriam, quodammodo commendabat, aliud tamen alio habebat acceptius. Idem quasi de mundi Rege est arbitrandum. Coli mavult quoquo modo, vel inepte, modo humane, quam per superbiam nullo modo coli."

[61] *Ibid.*: "Impios autem, ingratosque omnino, et sponte rebelles, tanquam hostis exterminat atque excruciat."

[62] *Ibid.*: "Illi igitur Deum prae caeteris, imo soli syncere colunt, qui eum actione, bonitate, veritate linguae, mentis claritate, qua possunt, et charitate qua debent, sedulo

b. Praeparatio Evangelica

We have already seen that even pagan religions were directed by divine providence. That the religion of Moses and the ancient Hebrews was a step towards Christianity has been said, and is in any case self-evident to any Christian who has read his Scripture. But in chapters entitled *De generatione filii Dei in aeternitate* (XIII), *Generatio filii in aeternitate et declaratio in tempore* (XV), and in some later chapters, we have long discussions concerning prophecies of the coming of Christ and preparations for His coming among both pagans and Hebrews. Here is a passage which deals with pagan prognostications of the Son of God:

> Orpheus called this Pallas who was born only from Zeus' head; Plato in [his] epistle to Hermias called this the Son of God the Father; in [his] *Epinomis* he called [it] *logos*, i.e., reason and word, when he says: *logos* most divine among all things adorned this visible world. Hermes Trismegistus mentions the word and the Son of God, and even the spirit, many times. Zoroaster also attributed intellectual progeny to God. Indeed, they all said what they could, and indeed with God's help. But only God understands this, and [only] someone to whom God would like to reveal it.[63]

These are the only names mentioned in this context. Only through the ancient theology can Ficino demonstrate even to non-Christians the eternity of the ideas regarding the Son of God and the Trinity, since God Himself revealed these mysterious truths to pre-Christians theologians. The reconciliation between the ancient theology and Christian truths is thus one of the proofs of the eternal history of Christianity.[64]

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venerantur. Tales vero sunt, ut ostendemus, quicunque ita Deum adorant, quemadmodum Christus vitae magister, eiusque discipuli praeceperunt."

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 18: "Hanc Palladem appellavit Orpheus, solo Iovis capite natam, hunc Dei patris filium Plato in Epistola ad Hermiam nominavit [Epistle VI, 323d2–4], in Epinomide nuncupavit logon, id est, rationem ac verbum dicens: Logos omnium divinissimus mundum hunc visibilem exornavit [*Epinomis*, 986c4–5: "… συναποτελῶν κόσμον ὃν ἔταξεν λόγος ὁ πάντων θειότατος ὁρατόν"]. Mercurius Trismegistus de verbo, et filio Dei, ac etiam de spiritu saepe mentionem facit. Zoroaster quoque intellectualem Deo prolem attribuit. Dixerunt isti quidem, quod potuerunt, et id quidem adiuvante Deo. Deus autem hoc solus intelligit, et cui Deus voluerit revelare." On Ficino and the Hermetic writings see e.g., Yates, *Giordano Bruno*… especially chapter two. On Ficino and the Chaldaic Oracles see e.g., Ilana Klutstein, 'Marsile Ficin et les 'Oracles Chaldaïques'', in Garfagnini [ed.], *Marsilio Ficino*… vol. 1, pp. 331–338.

[64] This reconciliation was appreciated by Ficino's contemporaries. See, e.g., Cristoforo Landino, *De vera nobilitate*, ed. Maria Teresa Liaci (Firenze 1970), pp. 77–78: "Verum pudet iam me de religione disputare in conspectu praesertim duorum antistitum triumque canonicorum, in quibus tanta, tam vera, tam salutaris doctrina sit. Nam ut alios

This argument was so influential that it apparently delayed a philological critique of the "ancient" theology by humanists.[65] But what concerns us is also the continuity between some of the outstanding pagan theologians—Orpheus, Plato, Hermes Trismegistus, Zoroaster—and Christian revelation. In the writings of early Fathers of the Church such as Clement and Eusebius, such names appear as precursors of Christianity. But in later Christian theology the very mention of these names, with reference to some works unknown in the Middle Ages, is an innovation. The placing of such names within a theory of *prisca religio* is Ficino's own.

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omittam, quid Marsilius iste vester in suo illo divinissimo 'De religione christiana' libro, quod aut ad illam corroborandam esset non corroboravit? aut quid quod extrudendum esset non penitus profligaverit? vir profecto et summa admiratione dignus et qui de christiano nomine optime meritus sit, quique acutissimo ingenio atque sapientissimo iudicio priscam illam quam nos archeam theologiam appellamus, quam a Mercurio Trimegisto incohatam [this is more than Ficino says] magnaque ex parte perfectam Plato penitus absolvit, nostrae coniunxit…" Landino's book was writen c. 1487, the year in which Ficino was appointed as a canon of the Florentine cathedral. At the time he wrote *De Christiana religione* he was just a priest, appointed on December 18, 1473 (See Liaci's introduction, *ibid*., p. 17). For Ficino's relations with the Roman curia see Kristeller, 'Marsilio Ficino and the Roman Curia', in *Humanistica Lovaniensia* XXXIVA (1985), pp. 83–98.

[65] Vasoli in his *Quasi*… pp. 16–17, asks why the myth of the *prisca theologia* lasted so long without answering the question. His discussion of *De Christiana religione* is important, including a comparison with Georgios Gemistos Plethon's conception of *prisca theologia* (pp. 23–38), a comparison with Ficino's sources (Nicolas of Lyra and Paul of Burgos) for the controversy with the Jews (pp. 121–219), and contains many sensitive historical insights, such as: "Se mai, sarà più opportuno sottolineare taluni caratteri essenziali della concezione ficiniana della 'pietas', quali emergono dal diretto linguaggio dei testi e che rivelano come la 'prisca theologia' fosse, per così dire, un ottimo pretesto, squisitamente 'ideologico' (e, quindi, per nulla storico o 'filologico'), per confermare un mutamento profondo della sensibilità religiosa e il proposito di elaborare una nuova teologia in aperta competizione con quella 'professionale' degli scolastici. Il cristianesimo di cui si parla nel *De christiana religione* è, infatti, una religione, la cui verità è testimoniata, in primo luogo dalla profezia e dal miracolo, eventi sovrannaturali che recano il segno di un diretto intervento divino e del suo costante manifestarsi in tutto l'ordine della creazione" (p. 48). But some of these insights need much more detailed analysis and elaboration on the basis of Ficino's text, and some, as I shall try to show, should be changed: e.g., Ficino's 'ideological' (a term which Vasoli uses without any serious historical discussion; I would use here simply 'the spiritual crisis and its solution') aspect is deeply connected to the double aspect of the history of Christianity, which will be discussed presently. Thus, the relation between religion and wisdom and Ficino's solution are not made clear: "Per porre fine a questa 'sciagura' che sta corrodendo i fondamenti di ogni sapere, l'unica salvezza possibile è la riunificazione della religione con la sapienza, ossia—per esprimere meno velatamente le intenzioni del Ficino—la rinascita di una 'religione filosofica' che restituisca ai 'sapientes' il compito di supremi custodi delle conoscenze umane e dei 'misteria' divini" (p. 42).

Ficino's treatment of original sin is another expression of his humanist approach to religion and its history:

> Therefore, this original sin is the source of the rest of the evils of soul and body. Those volumes of the Jews testify to this; their supreme antiquity beyond the rest [of the books] testifies to their divinity [as do] the agreement of almost all peoples, their propagation through the world, their indefatigable duration, harmony, greatness, temperance, and miracles. Hence that opinion of the Magi, who are descended from Zoroaster, that evidently all the evils of the body originate from evils of the soul, that the rest of the evils [could] be avoided if the soul is taken care of, indeed Plato hints at this in the *Timaeus* and declares [it] in the *Parmenides*.[66]

The evidence of the Hebrew Scriptures is of course binding on a Christian. But Ficino's emphasis on their antiquity, propagation, harmony, and other qualities as testimony for their divinity is something new. The presentation of these Hebrew Scriptures as the source of some of the opinions of Zoroaster and Plato recalls the Hellenistic *topos* of "borrowed wisdom", which Fathers like Clement had taken from some Jewish sources such as Josephus and Philo. But Ficino integrates this theme into his own version of *praeparatio Evangelica*. The special place of Plato as the culmination of pagan theology, as well as the ease with which Platonists adopted the principles and ideas of the Apostles and their pupils is brought out in the following passage:

> The whole of the ancient theology of the gentiles, in which Zoroaster, Hermes [Trismegistus], Orpheus, Aglaophemus, [and] Pythagoras agreed, is included in the books of our Plato. Plato in [his] epistles predicts mysteries of this kind which at last, after many ages, will be able to be manifested. Indeed, it happened in this way; for in the days of Philo and Numenius, for the first time, the intentions of the ancient theologians began to be understood in the Platonic writings, that is, immediately after the public appearances and writings of the Apostles and Apostolic disciples. For the Platonists used the divine light of the Christians to interpret the divine Plato. Hence, Basil the Great and Augustine confirm that the Platonists adopted for themselves the mysteries of John the Evangelist. I certainly found that the most important mysteries of Numenius, Philo, Plotinus, Iamblichus, [and] Proclus were adopted from

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[66] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 23: "Hoc igitur originale vitium est caeterorum malorum animae corporisque origo, hoc volumina illa Hebraeorum testificantur, quorum divinitatem testificatur summa illorum prae caeteris antiquitas, consensio pene omnium, propagatio per univers[or *delevi*]um, duratio indefessa, concordia, maiestas, sobrietas, et miracula. Hinc illa Magorum a Zoroastre descendentium opinio, omnia scilicet corporis mala, a malis animae[que *delevi*] proficisci, anima curata caetera mala vitari, hoc Plato in Timaeo [44a7–b1] quidem innuit, in Parmenide vero declarat."

> John, Paul, Hierotheus, [and] Dionysius the Areopagite. For whatever magnificent [things] they said about the divine mind and the angels, and [about] other things which belong to theology, was clearly adopted from the [Apostles].[67]

We can now see that even the great names of Zoroaster, Hermes, Orpheus, and Pythagoras do not represent isolated incidences of revelation. Rather, they were stages in the preparation for Plato's theology. Plato already announces the mysteries which were to be manifested in Christian revelation; and it is therefore not surprising that when Christianity was revealed, it was the Platonists who usurped its mysteries, even if some of them still gave them a pagan form.

One notes that Christianity brings into the historical scene both the dimension of time (***nam Philonis, Numeniique temporibus primum coepit*** *mens priscorum Theologorum in Platonicis chartis intelligi, videlicet* ***statim post*** *Apostolorum, Apostolicorumque discipulorum conciones et scripta*) and the profundity of eternity; but this already belongs to the double nature of Christianity which will be discussed later.

Ficino admits that he is developing the arguments or cultural programme of Basil and Augustine regarding the *usurpatio* and *acceptio* of the ideas of John, Paul, Hierotheus, and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in the philosophical writings of Numenius, Philo, Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Proclus. But Basil and Augustine confirm only that the Platonists—a very general and vague name—used the mysteries of John the Evangelist. Ficino places this idea in his own cultural programme, and he is doing so after hundreds of years in which these Greek authors and this philosophical tradition had hardly been known in the Latin West, except for some references and citations, mainly at second hand, in *De civitate Dei*.[68] It may not be wrong to say that Ficino

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[67] *Ibid.*, p. 25: "Prisca Gentilium Theologia, in qua Zoroaster, Mercurius, Orpheus, Aglaophemus, Pythagoras consenserunt, tota in Platonis nostri voluminibus continetur. Mysteria huiusmodi Plato in Epistolis vaticinatur, tandem post multa secula hominibus manifesta fieri posse. Quod quidem ita contigit, nam Philonis, Numeniique temporibus primum coepit mens priscorum Theologorum in Platonicis chartis intelligi, videlicet statim post Apostolorum, Apostolicorumque discipulorum conciones et scripta. Divino enim Christianorum lumine usi sunt Platonici ad divinum Platonem interpretandum. Hinc est quod magnus Basilius, et Augustinus probant, Platonicos Ioannis Evangelistae mysteria sibi usurpavisse. Ego certe reperi praecipua Numenii, Philonis, Plotini, Iamblici, Proculi mysteria, ab Ioanne, Paulo, Yerotheo, Dionysio Areopagita accepta fuisse. Quicquid enim de mente divina angelisque, et caeteris ad Theologiam spectantibus magnificum dixere, manifeste ab illis usurpaverunt."

[68] The fact that he himself mentions only Basil and Augustine shows that, for him,

starts this project anew, since he uses a far broader textual foundation (newly discovered *humanae litterae* now added to *sacrae litterae*) and also some new humanist philological and historical methods. This is at the centre of Ficino's humanist theology: the ancient theologians are in harmony with one another, and they all are represented in Plato; Plato is interpreted by those Neoplatonic philosophers who used and adopted the mysterious truths of Christianity. Since the *praecipua mysteria* of the late Platonists are based on John, Paul, Hierotheus, and Dionysius the Areopagite, Christianity is the climax of both the history of religion and the history of philosophy. These are the new context, methods, and relationships in which we can clearly see the emergence of a whole new theology, very different from the scholastic theology of the age. These *mysteria*, shared by pagan and Christians philosophers, are very far from Peter Lombard's *Sententiae* and the *quaestiones disputatae* of the Doctors of the Church, both in the modes and in the emphases of the theological discussion. In fact, this Platonic philosophy derived from the writings of

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there is no one with similar *auctoritas* between their age and his own. But we know that there were developments in mediaeval Platonism: see Eugenio Garin, *Studi sul platonismo medievale* (Firenze 1958). See Ficino's letter to Martin Prenninger (published by Raymond Klibansky in *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition During the Middle Ages* (London 1955), pp. 45–47) in which he sets out the history of the Platonic tradition up to his own day (but, as Klibanski emphasizes on p. 43, without the names of Philo, Origen, and Plethon, maybe because the absence of any Latin translation of their principal works, and William of Conches, maybe because of Ficino's "philosophical development, which had led him away from the mediaeval commentators of the *Timaeus*"). A good example of mediaeval Platonism is discussed in Carlos Steel, '*Henricus Gandavensis Platonicus*', in Guy Guldentops and Carlos Steel [eds.], *Henry of Ghent and the Transformation of Scholastic Thought. Studies in Memory of Jos Decorte* (Leuven 2003), pp. 15–39. See also the important remarks of Allen, who emphasizes the place of Plotinus in Ficino's new theology, in his *Synoptic Art*… p. 52: "… Ficino's programme emerged as something different from Augustine's and in intention certainly as much more radical. His aim was to champion Platonism, not merely as stepping stone to conversion, a propaedeutic to be cast aside eventually in the rapture of belief, but as an alternative, integral, and complementary theology, a theology granted by God to the gentiles and constituting a gentile Old Testament that contained, like its Hebraic counterpart, intimations or adumbrations of the mysteries of the New. In this scenario, interestingly, it is the arch interpreter, Plotinus, who takes centre stage or at least shares it with Plato, the authority to be interpreted." We should also remember Augustine's warnings at the beginning of book three of *De doctrina Christiana* in order to appreciate Ficino; see Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana* III, 1, 1: "Homo timens Deum voluntatem eius in scripturis sanctis diligenter inquirit. Et ne amet certamina pietate mansuetus; praemunitus etiam scientia linguarum, ne in verbis locutionibusque ignotis haereat, praemunitus etiam cognitione quarundam rerum necessariarum, ne vim naturamve earum, quae propter similitudinem adhibentur, ignoret, adiuvante etiam codicum veritate, quam sollers emendationis diligentia procuravit, veniat ita instructus ad ambigua scripturarum discutienda atque soluenda."

ancient theologians, Plato, and the Neoplatonic philosophers, replaces the Doctors of the Church and the dominance of *Liber Sententiarum* in this new humanist theology.

c. *The Incarnation As an Intervention of the Eternal in the Temporal*

We have already seen that the birth of Christ and the rise of Christianity had been anticipated by pagan theologians and, of course, by Moses and the prophets. In chapter fifteen Ficino presents the historical event of God becoming man under the title: *Generatio filii in aeternitate, et declaratio in tempore*.[69] The event itself—the generation of the Son—is part of eternal history, but its declaration is an incursion of eternal history into human temporal history, exactly in fitting with Christ's double nature. In fact, the double aspect of history demands two objects: the temporal world and an eternal world, which is the exemplar, the λόγος (translated by Ficino as *ratio* and *verbum*) of the mundane architect.[70] Through this λόγος, in the possession of God, the divine power from eternity inwardly impresses itself by saying itself and all other things.[71] All these events take place *ab aeterno*, completely out of time. These outward expressions were the divine oracles which, after the mysteries of the prophets, were divinely revealed to men by celestial spirits such as John the Evangelist and Paul the Apostle.[72] But mankind departed from God and could not rise again towards God without God, since it had

[69] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 20.

[70] *Ibid.*: "Ante mundi temporalis initium est mundus aeternus, mundi quidem huius exemplar. Mundani vero architecti ratio et intelligibile verbum, gloriae quoque ipsius splendor, et figura substantiae." That the temporal world is an imitation of an eternal exemplar: see Plato, *Timaeus*, 27d6–28b2. Plato's παράδειγμα is obviously Ficino's *exemplar* and his *architectus* is Plato's δημιουργός. The *ratio et intelligibile verbum* of this architect is reminiscent of Plato's νόησις μετὰ λόγου, but it is clear from what immediately follows that this is also Christ as *verbum Dei* of the first verses of the fourth Gospel.

[71] *Ibid.*: "Verbum huiusmodi semper penes Deum est, atque est ipse Deus, per hoc divina potestas ab aeterno dicebat ipsa secum, tum seipsam, tum reliqua cuncta, ac dicendo imprimebat intrinsecus." The first two clauses are slight adaptations of John 1, 1–2. The rest of the sentence appears like Ficino's comment on the creation story in *Genesis*. See what he says on p. 22: "Quid enim aliud creaturae sunt, quam cogitationum Dei quasi quaedam voces extra prolatae? Ita per verbum quodammodo iam sensibile factum sensibilia reformare."

[72] *Ibid.*: "Per hoc aliquando expressa sunt extrinsecus tam secula, quam quae in seculis omnia. Divina haec oracula post mysteria Prophetarum coelestes illi spiritus, Ioannes Evangelista, et Paulus Apostolus, hominibus fudere de coelo."

fallen into the lowest depths.[73] This was, of course, the consequence of original sin: man's mind needs God's grace for salvation. But Ficino emphasizes the fact that our minds were created by God for the sake of following God. Human beings were formed by the word of God, and by the light of the intellectual word the fog of the human intellect had to be dispersed, and by God's reason the rational animal had to be perfected.[74] All this still happens within temporal history, with divine dispensation, and even some moments of divine revelation. But now Ficino turns to the moment when the divine and eternal is no longer only the exemplar of the temporal world. This is when God the eternal intervened in person in the course of temporal history by becoming man:

> Therefore, when the times were constituted by the divine will, God by means of the word created a certain rational soul of man, which in the same moment he joined with the delicate fetus in the virginal womb, which conceived through the divine spirit. At the same moment the word itself also accepted human nature; and almost as man was made from [both] an immortal soul and a mortal body, so Christ was made [both] God and man from that man and God's word.[75]

Because of the crucial nature of this moment and its description, I shall quote the Latin original in the body of the text:

> Ergo statutis a divina voluntate temporibus, creavit Deus per verbum rationalem quandam hominis animam, quam eodem momento tenero foetui virginalis uteri, per divinum spiritum concipientis coniunxit. Momento quoque eodem verbum ipsum naturam assumpsit humanam, atque ferme sicut ex anima immortali et mortali corpore homo factus est unus, ita ex homine illo ac Dei verbo factus est Christus Deus et homo.

That Christ was conceived by the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit is part of the Creed: *et incarnatus est de spiritu sancto ex Maria Virgine*. But to say that God *created* by means of his *verbum* a rational soul which was conjoined to this infant is dubious, to say the least. The Creed says clearly *genitum non factum* and this applies to his soul as much

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[73] *Ibid.*: "Defecit autem a Deo quandoque genus humanum, neque sine Deo poterat unquam in Deum resurgere, quod ad ima ceciderat."

[74] *Ibid.*: "Resurgere autem quandoque mentes humanae debebant, ne frustra a Deo creatae fuissent, quae ab eo creatae consequendi ipsius gratia fuerant. Per Dei verbum formati quondam homines fuerant, per verbum idem reformari debebant, et merito, per intellectualis enim verbi lucem depellenda erat caligo intellectus humani, per rationem Dei rationale animal emendandum."

[75] *Ibid.*

as to his body. Besides, how could God create the soul of Christ *per verbum*, while we have been told, in the words of the first two verses of the fourth Gospel that this *verbum* is Christ Himself? We continue: at that moment the word itself took human nature. But in the Creed it was Christ Himself who *homo factus est*. If Christ Himself is *verbum Dei*, as is clear from the fourth Gospel, how could His soul have been *created* by the same *verbum*, and at a certain moment of time? After all, Christ was *ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula*. His soul is described as rational and immortal, both philosophical terms. But His body, says Ficino, was mortal. What about His resurrection? Was it only a resurrection of His soul? Probably not, since His soul, like all rational souls, was in its nature immortal, as every Platonist knows. So probably the resurrection was only of His body. The mixture of elements of the Creed and Platonic ideas is obvious even in this description of one of the greatest moments in history. In the present state of our evidence I cannot answer the questions I have raised here. To the best of my knowledge no contemporary churchman or institutions accused Ficino of heresy on the basis of this passage.

From this moment onwards divinity, described in terms of infinite goodness, came down to men and wanted to communicate itself to all things. When God's infinite goodness joined itself to man in whom, *tanquam in media rerum specie*, (because man represents the middle species of created being, he includes within himself all other species; this is the idea of man as a microcosm) all things were embraced, it did so without any change of the seat of the divine greatness, since it is always everywhere, and without demeaning its divine sublimity by descending to the level of human things, but rather by raising those human things to itself.[76] Ficino adds yet another Neoplatonic image: the infinite light of the divine sun, which could never be infected by the union with man. Like increasing and the decreasing in man, which belong to the body and therefore do not penetrate into the soul, so too the human sufferings of Christ belonged to Him as a man and did not penetrate into His divinity. Christ as a man suffered human things; as God He did divine things.[77]

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[76] *Ibid.*: "Sic infinita bonitas, quae se communicare vult omnibus, tunc modo quodam aptissimo se ipsam cunctis communicavit, quando sibi coniunxit hominem, in quo tanquam in media rerum specie cuncta comprehenduntur, neque mutavit tunc sedem suam divina maiestas, cum sit semper ubique, neque se ad humana quasi per defectum deiecit divina sublimitas, sed humana ad se potius elevavit."

[77] *Ibid.*: "Neque infinita divini Solis lux, ex adiunctione hominis ullo modo infici

In the following chapters, Ficino explains and elaborates the need for the Incarnation and seems to correct some of the impressions given by his first and concise description. In the long chapter XVI (*Convieniens fuit Deum se homini iungere*)[78] he explains why God's creation was not sufficient in itself to show man the way to God. God became man in order to show man that he can, to some extent, become God. Originally—before the Incarnation—God only gave man the natural instinct to desire to become divine in some way. But at a moment of time—that is, with the Incarnation—He also gave him a means of rising to divinity.[79] This could only be done by God Himself becoming a man, thus showing man that he can become divine as much as possible. One cannot read into expressions like 'becoming divine as much as possible' or 'to rise up into God' more than the traditional *visio beatifica*. What is new here is the tension between continuity and innovation. In one way the rising into God of the Christian is the continuity of the natural instinct to become divine which existed in pre-Christian religion. God's grace given to man through the Incarnation provides the believer with the means of fulfilling this natural instinct. At the same time, the difference between an unfulfilled instinctive yearning and its fulfilment in eternal life and the beatific vision required the most extreme act of divine intervention: God Himself had to become man.

In the next chapter, XVII (*Qualis coniunctio sit Dei et hominis*), Ficino introduces the Trinity, and silently corrects some of the impressions which may have been created by his initial description of the Incarnation. The Trinity is three persons in one nature, while in Christ we have three natures in one person: God, the soul, and the body. Thus man is compared to God.[80] This description of the three natures in the one person of Christ may correct the impresson we had of Christ being

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unquam potuit, sed homo inde super illustrari, ac perfici, atque ut in homine augeri et minui, sic ad corpus pertinent, ut in animam nunquam penetrent. Ita in Christo humana pati proprie ad hominem pertinebat, in divinitatem non penetrabat. Christus igitur ut homo patiebatur humana, ut Deus divina operabatur."

[78] *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 20: "Cur olim Deus homo factus est, ut homo quandoque quodammodo Deus efficeretur. Deus enim quodammodo fieri potest, qui naturali instinctu cupit, studetque esse divinus. Non potest autem in Deum surgere, nisi Deus aliquando ita trahat, ut surgat, quemadmodum ante traxerat, ut appeteret."

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 21: "Sicut ergo in trinitate tres personae in eadem natura existunt, sic in Christo persona una in tribus existit naturis, Deo, animoque, et corpore, atque ibi homo comparatur ad Deum, quemadmodum manus ad animam, imo lingua ad intellectum."

composed of an immortal soul and a mortal body. These were not different persons, but a divine person connected to a human nature to become one person.[81]

In chapter XVIII (*Quam decens Dei hominisque coniunctio*)[82] Ficino returns to the theme of Christ's appearance for the sake of saving mankind from its ruins, but now he connects it with the arguments he has already used, concerning the appropriateness for God of becoming man, in order for man to become God, and adds here the idea of sainthood.[83]

In the next two sections, I shall deal with what Ficino has to say about the teachings of Christ and his disciples and the spread of the new religion.

d. *The Teachings of Christ*

Ficino devotes four chapters (XIX–XXIII)[84] to Christ's activities. It is significant that only one of these chapters, XXII (*Christus errores expulit, veritatem aperuit*)[85] seems to deal with the theoretical problem of truth. But on close reading these *errores* turn out to be the belief in many gods, who are regarded by Ficino as evil demons, following a tradition going back to some of the late books of the New Testament (I Tim 4, 1; Rev 9, 20), and very widespread in the writings of the early Fathers, from Justin Martyr onwards.[86] What Ficino does in this chapter is to show that the doctrine of the one true God, as against the many evil demons, was the main theoretical issue which Christ taught mankind. Even there, he was preceded by some Gentiles like Zoroaster, Hermes,

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[81] *Ibid.*: "Non sunt autem duae in Christo personae, sed una, scilicet persona verbi coniuncta, non personae hominis, sed natura." But what about the immortal soul created by the Word itself, as we have been told in the initial story? For a further discussion of these tensions in Ficino see Michael J.B. Allen, 'Marsilio Ficino on Plato, the Neoplatonists and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity', in *Renaissance Quarterly* 37 (1984), pp. 555–584.

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[83] *Ibid.*: "Ut ergo homo ex hac ruina rursus ascenderet ad sublimia, congruentissimum fuit, sublimem Deum ex alto huic manum porrigere, hac videlicet ratione, ut seipsum huic visibilem, amabilem, imitabilemque efficeret. Nullus ad hoc aptior modus, quam quod Deus fieret homo, ut homo, qui corporalis iam factus, corporalibus inhiabat, Deum iam quodammodo, et corporalem, et humanum clarius cognosceret, et amaret ardentius facilius quoque et diligentius imitaretur, fieretque beatus."

[84] *Ibid.*, pp. 23–26.

[85] *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25.

[86] One of the first extant clear statements concerning the pagan gods as evil demons can be found in Justin, *Apologia I*, 5.

Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato.[87] In this context Ficino adds to Plato also Socrates and Varro as people who ridiculed the belief in these demons before the advent of Christ.[88] But what is significant in the Gospel of Christ is not so much the theoretical side, where God who had become man revealed to people a truth which had once been known, as the salvation from original sin and the appearance of the true Christian virtues which will unite man with God. It is no accident that the first of these chapters, XIX, is entitled: *Adventus Christi dat beatitudinem, fide, spe, charitate*.[89] *Beatitudo* is precisely that close relation to God which Christianity introduced for the first time.[90] This gift of divine grace can only be achieved by those who possess the three Pauline virtues of I Cor 13. Ficino explains the connection between these three virtues and beatitude in the very first sentence of this chapter.[91] It is true that on the next page (23) he defines *fides* as *scientiae fundamentum*, but the object of this knowledge is still faith in God and in the possible achievemnt of beatitude. In chapter XXI,[92] Ficino emphasizes the practical aspect of Christ's activities and Christ's role as a teacher of the right way of life. In His activities, the miraculous element, as a means of persuading even simple people, is emphasized.[93] This emphasis on the miraculous will be utilized and expanded in Ficino's discussion of

[87] See n. 67 above and its context.

[88] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 25: "Merito Socrates, Plato, et Varro, quamvis latenter propter turbam, superstitiones Gentilium deriserunt Iesus denique illas perdidit, ne homines perderentur." The Christian story that Socrates was condemned for denouncing (!) demons, is found already in the chapter of Justin cited in n. 86. As to Varro's critique of pagan superstitions, Ficino's main source is obviously Book VI of Augustine's *De civitate Dei*. These evil demons are unlikely to be part of *prisca religio* in its purity, since this *prisca religio* was given to man under some divine dispensation. Melchizedek was "the priest of the most high God" (Gen 14, 18); and the Sibylline Oracles also testified to one God. It appears that Ficino here follows Augustine's interpretation of the first chapters of the Bible, according to which polytheism was a corruption of the original monotheism.

[89] *Ibid*., pp. 22–23.

[90] See n. 79 above.

[91] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 22: "Nemo beatitudinem, quae in divina consistit contemplatione, consequi potest, nisi Deum ardenter amet, ardenter amare Deum nequimus, nisi speremus eum quandoque assequi posse, sperare non valemus, nisi prius credamus tum Deum esse, tum nos Deo posse quandoque frui." This chapter of I Cor is very often referred to by Ficino.

[92] *Ibid*., pp. 23–24.

[93] *Ibid*.: "Opera enim multo magis quam verba movent, in disciplina praesertim morali, cuius finis proprius versatur in actione. Esse illum Deum declaraverunt miracula, ut fidem apud dociles doctrina eius haberet…"

the Apostles and their followers; but in mentioning Christ's miracles in our context, the emphasis is different. It is Christ's *deeds* (*opera*) which gave people a far better moral education than any words. As a teacher of life, Christ taught people a 'purgatorial virtue' in order to purify them from the vices of the body.[94] Christ's mission as a moral teacher is clearly stated at the beginning of the last Christological chapter, XXIII, entitled: *Christus est idea, et exemplar virtutum*:[95]

> What else was Christ if not a certain book of morality, indeed sent from heaven as a living [book] of divine philosophy, and the very idea of divine virtues manifested to human eyes?[96]

The emphasis again is on teaching even uneducated people true wisdom, which is not something theoretical but the practice of divine morality and the divine virtues.[97] Christ taught people also the more traditional virtues, *recta iustitia, benevolentia, magnanimitas, fortitudo, temperantia, mansuetudo*.[98] The Evangelists, who *non humana, sed divina scripsere manu*, wrote His life and activities.[99] Ficino then goes into a philological discussion concerning such issues as the Hebrew Matthew which was supposed to exist in the library of Pamphilus, the friend of Eusebius, and other versions of the Gospels as well as some imitators of the Evangelists. But he concludes that, although there are apparent disagreements between them, they never amount to contradictions.[100] Ficino is of course not a 'full time' philologist like Valla or Poliziano, but he shows an awareness of philological issues and difficulties. That he ends up accepting the essential harmony of the Gospels is hardly surprising, since most scholars held this view until the late eighteenth century. He ends his discussion of Christ with another proof of the truth of the

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[94] *Ibid.*, p. 24: "… Christus vitae magister per doctrinam vitamque suam quasi gladium et ignem immisit in mundum, hoc est, virtutem purgatoriam, animique purgati, ut omnes corporalium vitiorum fomites resecaret ad vivum, atque consumeret." Notice the strong biblical images of the sword, fire, and burning.

[95] *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

[96] *Ibid.*, p. 25: "Quid aliud Christus fuit, nisi liber quidam moralis, imo divinae Philosophiae vivens de coelo missus, et divina ipsa idea virtutum humanis oculis manifesta?"

[97] *Ibid.*: "… hic veram sapientiam nos docebit, qui rudes olim homunculos subito reddidit sapientes."

[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[100] *Ibid.*: "Apparet interdum in illis quasi dissona quaedam in rebus minimis dissimilitudo, nunquam revera contrarietas."

Gospels, once again the many and manifest miracles.[101] This is a historical argument. The Evangelists do not narrate private events, but miracles which were open to large multitudes. Therefore, they could not lie to a public which had seen these miracles.

e. *The Apostles and the Propagation of Christianity*

We have mentioned at the end of our first section that Ficino deals with the Apostles and early Christianity in his early chapters, as a sequel to *pristina religio* and in some way its culmination. He leaves the Incarnation and Christ's ministry, the direct intervention of the eternal in the temporal, to later chapters. I have chosen to present some outstanding points of his discussions of the Incarnation and of the life and teaching of Christ before the discussion of the Apostles and the rise of Christianity, reversing Ficino's order. This is not just in order to keep the chronological sequence, but also because much of what Ficino says about the Apostles and their followers can be understood better in the light of what he will say later regarding Christ himself. It is significant that chapter IV (*Omnis religio boni habet nonnihil, modo ad Deum ipsum creatorem omnium dirigatur, Christiana syncera est*)[102] ends with the words: *quemadmodum Christus vitae magister, eiusque discipuli praeceperunt*, while the next chapters, V–VII,[103] deal only with *Christi discipuli*. As we have already seen, *Christus vitae magister* is discussed again later in the chapters on Christ Himself.

In the fifth chapter[104] Ficino discusses the disciples' manner of spreading Christianity. He argues that instead of trying to cheat mankind with some doctrine which could have been more persuasive to man's intellect, they had the courage to discuss difficult doctrines in front of leaders, kings, princes, and many learned men who were much stronger and more cultivated.[105] Who were those disciples? Eleven

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[101] *Ibid.*: "Miracula vero tam multa, quam magna, tam publica, tot annos in Iudaea, et Ierusalem ubi facta dicuntur, praedicaverunt, ut constet illos verissima praedicavisse."

[102] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[103] *Ibid.*, pp. 4–8.

[104] The title of this chapter is: "Discipuli Christi neminem deceperunt."

[105] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 4: "Si discipuli Christi decipiendi humani generis gratia, figmentum introducere cogitavissent, rationem certe facilioris persuasionis aliquam habuissent. Contra vero fecerunt, aggressi enim sunt rem tum ad credendum, tum ad observandum omnium rerum difficillimam. Adde quot modis etiam difficillimis, si tempora, loca, personasque consideres, in temporibus scilicet eruditis, in urbibus amplissimis, plenisque omnium doctrinarum, adversum potentes, principesque, et doc-

Apostles and seventy-two of Christ's pupils.[106] God had chosen them, Ficino claims, citing Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, in the same way that He chose foolish things in order to confuse the wise, and contemptible things instead of noble ones.[107] God was violating social conventions, and so Christ's disciples did not obtain any reward in this life for the pain which they suffered, nor did they expect any reward or promise one to the nations;[108] nevertheless, they believed that they were preaching true things and certainly understood those things.[109] Both the act of believing and of understanding are important for Ficino. He reformulates this idea in the opening lines of the first chapter of the *Platonic Theology*:

> If we expect Christ only in this life, we are more miserable than all human beings.[110]

The notion of an afterlife is of course essential, and Ficino gives some examples of the courage which the Apostles derived from this notion.[111] It should be noted that in the entire discussion he refers only to the Scriptures and does not mention any Father or Doctor of the Church. He continues:

> Hence Paul and Apollo, everywhere when they discuss the mysteries of Christ with learned men, adduced the books of the prophets. Paul often commands his disciples, especially priests, to dedicate themselves carefully to the profound understanding of the prophets.[112]

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tos et multos, cum ipsi debilissimi essent, omnium rerum egeni, rudes ab initio, et paucissimi."

[106] *Ibid.*: "Undecim enim Christus reliquit Apostolos duo vero illi et septuaginta Christi discipuli ab Apostolis regebantur."

[107] *Ibid.*: "Audire licet Paulum Corinthiis ita dicentem: Videte vocationem vestram fratres, quia non multi sapientes secundum carnem, non multi potentes, non multi nobiles, sed quae stulta sunt mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat sapientes, et infirma mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat fortia, et ignobilia mundi, et contemptibilia elegit Deus, et ea quae non sunt, ut ea, quae sunt, destrueret [I Cor 1, 26–28]."

[108] *Ibid.*: "… alioquin nihil obtinuissent, neque praemium tanti laboris ullum in hac vita, vel ipsi praecipiebant, expectabantque, vel populis pollicebantur."

[109] *Ibid.*: "Credebant igitur illi, se vera hominibus praedicare, imo certe quid praedicabant, intelligebant."

[110] *Ibid.*: "Si in hac vita tantum speramus in Christo, miserabiliores sumus cunctis hominibus."

[111] *Ibid.*: "Saepe praedicebant se morituros pro fide, et postea universos, qui eorum disciplinam secuti essent, acerba, et nefanda passuros. Ut obmittam, quod abiiciebant quaecunque habentur a mortalibus bona, abiicique iubebant, neque in angulis susurrabant, sed palam vulgo suam doctrinam audacter disseminabant." See also n. 79.

[112] *Ibid.*, p. 5: "Hinc Paulus et Apollo ubique cum doctis de Christi mysteriis dis-

Ficino again emphasizes the importance of believing and understanding[113] and the willingness of Paul, Peter, John the Evangelist, and other disciples to suffer and die for their faith in Christ.[114] This is also the theme of the next chapter, entitled: *Quo animo Christi discipuli laborabant.*[115] Ficino's only sources here are once again the Scriptures: Paul's *Epistles* and the *Apocalypse.* He emphasizes, by citing I Cor 3, 4–5 and Rev 22, 8–9, that the Apostles and even the angels, who are merely the servants of God, should not be adored or worshipped, since God alone is worthy of being worshipped.[116] This reference again to the separation

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serentes, Prophetarum volumina in medium adducebant. Iubet saepe Paulus discipulos suos, praecipue sacerdotes, profundae prophetarum intelligentiae diligenter incumbere."

[113] *Ibid.*: "Credebant igitur, intelligebantque, ut dixi, quod praedicabant." Immediately before this sentence, the printed Latin version misses out some lines which include a citation from Origen. See the Italian version, *Della religione Christiana…* p. 20: "Origene contra Celso assegnia, che san Paulo riprende coloro, i quali senza consideratione credono: et aggiugne che la consuetudine de Christiani è tirare a se gl'huomini con ragioni alla sententia loro, della quale non si fa intra loro dubbio alcuno. *Si che (come disopra dissi) coloro credevano et intendevano quello, che predicavano a gli altri.*" Origen, it should be noted, is the first post-biblical figure mentioned in this treatise.

[114] *Ibid.*: "Alioquin pro disciplinae illius assertione nequaquam tam intrepide, tam libenter se continuis laboribus, periculis, verberibus, et certae morti supposuissent. Paulus pro Christi gloria annos septem atque triginta, supra quam credi possit, usque ad extremum spiritum omni afflictionum genere continuo laboravit. Laboravit tempus idem et Petrus, laboravit Ioannes Evangelista annos octo et sexaginta, caeterique per omnem vitam similiter."

[115] *Ibid.*, pp. 5–7. See the Italian title, *Della religione Christiana…* p. 21: "Con quanto libero et grande animo s'affaticavano i discepoli di Christo."

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 7: "Quod autem ipse non pro sua, sed pro sola Christi gloria contenderet, sic aperit. Inter vos alius dicit, ego quidem sum Pauli, alius ego ipsius Apollo, nonne homines estis quod enim est Apollo? quid vero Paulus? ministri eius, cui credidistis, et unicuique sicut Dominus dedit"; "Addit, cum Cornelius quidam adorare Petrum voluisset, a Petro increpitum, prohibitumque fuisse. Praeterea cum Lycaonienses propter miracula Paulo et Barnabae, tanquam diis immolare vellent, ab ipsis non fuisse permissos. Ioannes quoque in Apocalypsi se adorari prohibuit. Ex quo patet Apostolos non suum commodum, vel honorem, sed solam Christi gloriam quaesivisse." Here, again, before the last sentence ("Ex quo patet…") we find in the Italian version, a paragraph with another quotation of Origen, which is missing in the Latin version. See *Della religione Christiana…* p. 30: "Conchiudiamo questo discorso con la sententia d'Origene contra Celso, ove cosi dice, Questo è miracolo a intendere come Giesu potesse per tutta la Grecia et per le gran regioni de Barbari, spargere i comandamenti, i quali rimovessino gli animi da tutti i vitii: et convertissingli all'honore del sommo Iddio. Ma noi che seguiamo la dottrina di Giesu, esercitiamo sempre et la mente et la lingua intorno a precetti suoi: et per l'osservantia di questi facciamo ogni cosa. Et quando siamo bestemmiati, benediciamo gli altri, siamo ingiuriati et sopportiamo in pace. Quanto sieno stati, et ancora sieno constanti i Christiani nel sopportare i tormenti per la fede è manifesto, massimamente per questo, che piu presto sostengono la morte, che voglino

of human and divine, as we shall see, is one of Ficino's main themes in this work.

At the beginning of the next chapter Ficino argues that Christ's disciples and their followers saw much greater and clearer miracles than we do, since we have been born and educated as Christians without the need to suffer and struggle on behalf of a new religion, which at that time seemed almost monstrous to most people; and the more monstrous it appeared to be, the clearer the signs and omens it required.[117] The emphasis here is on the words *miraculum*, *signum*, and *portentum*. These were the instruments used to demonstrate the truth of this new faith in the early days of Christianity, and such instruments should have made the divine and true nature of the new belief clear, in contrast to the common opinions of the people and of the various pagan philosophical schools. But at present, Ficino says, religion has become a matter of habit to us. The implication, I think, is that at present the wondrous and supernatural essence of Christianity is less appreciated. There is some analogy between the Christians at present and the pagans and Jews in the early years of Christianity. The Jews were looking for signs, and the Greeks were looking for wisdom in order to accept what appeared to be monstrous and unintelligible to the human intellect. But the basis of Christianity is its supernatural essence, as signified by miracles, and the more monstrous it seemed to the human intellect, the greater and clearer were the miracles required to validate it. Once again Ficino points out the gap between the human capacity of understanding and the supernatural essence of the Christian mysteries. In what follows he cites not only from Scripture but also, what he does very rarely in this work, in both its Latin and Italian versions, a post-biblical figure: Tertullian.[118] The quotation from ICor 1, 22–25,

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rinegare la fede Christiana, etiandio con una parola. Certamente noi siamo piu pronti a por giu il corpo nostro in qualunque tormento per la fede Christiana, che non sono gli altri a por giu il mantello." Compare with the centrality of God in the epideictic sermon which represents the new humanist theology and rhetoric in O'Malley, *Praise and Blame*… pp. 48, 75.

[117] *Ibid.*: "Discipuli Christi, eorumque sectatores longe manifestiora maioraque miracula viderunt quam nos, qui quamvis in hac religione nati, educatique simus, tamen non tantum pro re nobis consueta laboraremus, quantum illi pro nova et quasi, ut ita loquar, monstruosa laboraverunt, quae quanto monstuosior apparet, tanto clarioribus signis, portentisque ab initio, ut crederetur, indiguit."

[118] *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8: "… unde ut Lucas Evangelista scribit, cum Paulus Apostolus hac de re coram Agrippa rege, ac Portio Festo Iudaeae praeside disputaret, Festum exclamasse, insannis o Paule, multae literae te insanire compellunt [Act 26, 24, with slight varia-

especially verse 25 (*Quia quod stultum est Dei, sapientius est hominibus, et quod infirmum est Dei, fortius est hominibus*), emphasizes the gap between man and God or between human reasoning and divine mysteries. One notes that the emphasis on the mysteries which are beyond human reason-

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tions]. Huc tendit etiam illud Tertulliani ad Romanos iudices. Haec et nos risimus aliquando, de vestris sumus, fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani. Putandum est igitur illos, qui haec asserebant, et qui fidem asseverantibus adhibebant, miracula palam Deo digna vidisse [Tertullian is good evidence for the idea of the need of miracles; but the quotation from Acts 26 is again overinterpreted. Festus is reacting to Paul's defence at 2–23, in which the only miracle is his vision on the road to Damascus. This is indeed a great miracle, but it is only one miracle. In accusing Paul of *insania* for reading too many books, Festus is referring to verse 22, Paul's extensive reading of the prophets. A miracle has certainly occurred, but this is not what is emphasized in the context]. Hinc Paulus ad Corinthios: Iudaei signa petunt, Graeci sapientiam quaerunt, nos autem praedicamus Christum crucifixum, Iudaeis quidem scandalum, gentibus autem stultitiam, ipsis autem conversis Iudaeis, atque Graecis Christum, Dei virtutem, et Dei sapientiam. Quia quod stultum est Dei, sapientius est hominibus, et quod infirmum est Dei, fortius est hominibus [I Cor 1, 22–25, with variations]." (As noted in the text, this passage is not chiefly about miracles) Compare the Italian version, *Della religione Christiana*… pp. 31–32. A few lines later there is a long quotation from Tertullian's *Apologia*: "Audiamus divinum illum virum Tertullianum Carthaginensem in Apologia ad Romanos iudices ita clamantem: Sed hoc agite boni praesides, cruciate, torquete, damnate, atterite nos, probatio est enim innocentiae nostrae iniquitas vestra. Ideo nos haec pati Deus patitur. Nam et proxime ad leonem damnando Christianam, potius quam ad leonem, confessi estis, labem pudicitiae apud nos atrociorem omni poena, et omni morte reputari. Nec quicquam tamen proficit exquisita crudelitas vestra, illecebra est magis sectae, plures efficimur quotiens metimur a vobis, semen est sanguis Christianorum [L 12–13], omnia implevimus. Ac si non apud istam disciplinam magis occidi liceret, quam occidere potuimus inermes, nec rebelles, sed tantummodo discordes, solius divortii invidia adversus vos dimicasse. Si enim tanta vis hominum in aliquem orbis remotissimum locum abrupisset a vobis, suffudisset utique dominationem vestram tot amissio civium, imo etiam et ipsa destitutione punisset proculdubio expavissetis ad solitudinem vestram, ad silentium rerum, et ob stuporem quendam quasi mortuae urbis quae fussetis, quibus imperaretis, nam pene omnes cives Christianos habetis." I cannot identify the second part of this long quotation, but it is not in Tertallian's *Apologia*. This quotation is followed by yet another one—likewise both in Latin and Italian—from Origen: "Origines quoque in quatro Periarchon libro inquit, Innumerabiles in singulis mundi regionibus homines relictis patriis legibus, Christianam legem subito suscepisse, omniaque tormentorum genera, et mortem in eius gloriam libentissime et quotidie ferre." Compare the two quotations in the Italian version, *Della religione Christiana*… pp. 33–34. These passages already refer, not to miracles, but to the readiness of the early Christians to suffer torment and death for their faith. This comes after a few lines in which Ficino jumps, with no warning to the reader, from the statement about Paul's conversion because of manifest miracles—see n. 120—to a long discussion of the martyrdom of early Christians. The connection between this and miracles is not explained. One can only speculate about the missing link. Perhaps Ficino regarded the willingness of the early Christians to suffer all kinds of torments and death for their faith as further evidence for the great and many miracles which they still witnessed.

ing appears in the chapters dealing with the Apostles and the nature of early Christianity; probably both because the Apostles were the ones who instituted these mysteries and turned them into practice, but also because to Christ Himself such mysteries and their meaning were perfectly intelligible.

But there is another gap, this time in Ficino's own treatment of his sources. It is true that Christ's disciples witnessed greater and clearer miracles than Ficino's contemporaries: one only has to read the first chapters of Acts to see this. But quoting the passage from ICor 1, 18–25 to show that Paul himself witnessed great and clear miracles looks like another example of reading more into a text than its apparent meaning—something we have already encountered in the quotation from Plato's *Protagoras*.[119] In fact, in the passage from ICor 1, Paul is not basing his own preaching (*praedicatio*, κήρυγμα) on miracles, but rather on the cross of Christ (23), which is: *ipsis autem vocatis, Iudaeis atque Graecis, Christus Dei virtus et Dei sapientia* (24). It is the Jews who look for *signa* (22; σημεῖα. Both in biblical Greek and Latin, this means miracle, and translates the Hebrew אות). This passage clearly stresses the gap between human and divine power and wisdom. Even if the crucifixion (and the implied resurrection) is a great miracle, the miraculous aspect is not emphasized, and one can hardly speak of *manifestiora maioraque miracula*.

So, Ficino argues:

> Only by miracles, and indeed by those most evident [miracles], could Paul, that noble, powerful, most wise, and brave man, have been led from [being] the most passionate enemy of Christians to becoming suddenly [their] most passionate defender; and of his own free will he suffered so many injuries, solely on account of [his] love for Christ, that no one can count them.[120]

Only through miracles can a man, even someone like Paul, overcome the gap between understanding and believing and loving. In other words, man cannot overcome the gap between the human and the

[119] See above n. 52 and context.

[120] Ficino, *De Christians religione*… p. 8: "Solis miraculis, et illis quidem manifestissimis adduci potuit Paulus, vir nobilis, potens, sapientissimus, atque fortissimus, ut ex acerrimo Christianorum hoste, repente acerrimus defensor evaderet, totque incommodis se sponte subiiceret ob solum Christi amorem, quot nemo queat enumerare." This is Ficino's comment on the passage from ICor 1, 22–25, quoted in n. 118. As I have already remarked, the passage from ICor 1, is not about miracles, and certainly not in the plural.

divine by the power of his finite intellect but only by miracles which are direct and supernatural revelations. But miracles in the present are weaker and less clear than those which occurred in the early days of Christianity. The Christian religion has won the battle and become the religion of the Western world, but it has also become merely a matter of habit for most Christians, so much so that they need to be reminded of its basic principles.

In the title of chapter eight we read: *Christiana religio in sola Dei virtute fundata est*. Ficino emphasizes again the difference between human and divine power,[121] and he mentions three attributes of God which went into the making of Christianity: power, wisdom, and divine hope.[122] Only through these attributes, on which Christianity was founded, did the religion succeed in overcoming all its enemies—as had been predicted many years before by the prophets, the Sibyls, and by Christ Himself.[123]

In the sections on *prisca religio* and *praeparatio Evangelica* I have discussed mainly passages which point to the continuity between the great religious leaders of the past and Plato as a precursor of Christianity.

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[121] *Ibid*.: "Si Christiana religio haud quaquam fundata fuit in potentia, vel sapientia humana, vel voluntate, imo vero invitis et contra nitentibus passim multis potentibus, doctisque viris, et humanis oblectamentis, tam subito exorta est, tam repente per universum orbem propagata."

[122] *Ibid*.: "Necessarium est hanc ipsam religionem in potestate, sapientia, speque divina fuisse fundatam." God's power and wisdom (Θεοῦ δύναμις καὶ Θεοῦ σοφία; in the Vulgate, *Dei virtus et Dei sapientia*) are indeed two of the main themes of that passage in ICor 1. And so they played a part in the Christian *praedicatio* (21). But *spes divina* as one of the attributes of God is not only absent from this passage, but from the New Testament in general. This makes sense, since God the omnipotent and omniscient cannot possibly hope. Where did Ficino get this *spes* and how does it fit in with God? These are not of course the three classical theological virtues: *fides, sperantia*, and *caritas*, which are purely human and are derived from ICor 13, 13: *nunc autem manet fides, spes, caritas, tria haec; maior autem ex his est caritas*, where the context is clearly the state of man in this life. *Sapientia* is also mentioned both as one of the seven gifts and one of the cardinal moral virtues. See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas' systematic discussion of the seven gifts of the sacred spirit, the three theological virtues, and the four moral or intellectual virtues in his *Summa theologiae* I, q. 68. But, of course, this is human wisdom. *Potestas* is a purely divine attribute, and no theologian would make it a human virtue except, perhaps, in a political context. As far as *spes divina* is concerned, it is important to establish whether Ficino is using some patristic or scholastic source or whether, instead, it is an original idea of his.

[123] *Ibid*., pp. 8–9: "Quid quod multis ante seculis longo ordine a plurimis Prophetis atque Sibyllis, singula haec praedicta fuerunt? quod in sequentibus ostendemus. Quid quod Christus vitae magister, mortem suam, persecutionem adversum discipulos suos ubique futuram, propagationem, immutabilitatemque religionis suae, miserabilem Iudaeorum ruinam brevi venturam, Gentilium conversionem, Iudaeorum quorundam

But even there we saw that the late Platonists were influenced by the Christian mysteries. True mysteries, presented through miracles and the power of prophecy, are indeed what the Apostles introduced into the history of religion, and they could only do this because of the unique and one-time intervention of the divine incarnate in human history. There were of course pagan mysteries (the mysteries of Eleusis and the Orphic mysteries) and pagan prophecies (Chaldaic Oracles and the Sibyls). But Ficino would consider such phenomena merely as an expression of the pre-Christian and unfulfilled natural human drive towards the divine. The Christian mysteries, which are based on true revelation, help man achieve this closeness to God as far as possible.

In fact, Ficino stresses the new and revolutionary nature of the Christian massage in a discussion of the Sermon on the Mount (*concio illa*) and the miraculous fashion in which it persuaded the audience. Such a message, directed against wealth and property, advocating doing good to one's enemies and a rejection of the present life, could not have persuaded such a multitude even if it had been delivered by the greatest of ancient rhetoricians: Demosthenes and Cicero. Thus, *sacrae litterae* present a supernatural message which is greater than anything we find in *humanae litterae*.[124] How, then, did Christ succeed in persuading so many people?

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pertinaciam, usque ad mundi finem duraturam, tum ipse se praedixit, tum discipulos suos inspiravit ut dicent?" These words are followed only in the Italian version by another quotation from Origen. See *Della religione Christiana*… p. 36: "Qui accade il detto d'Origene contro a Celso, che dice cosi: Oltre a miracoli, tre sono i segni della divinità della christiana legge. Primo che ella ritrae gli animi da'peccati mirabilmente. Secondo che ella fu predetta da'propheti. Tertio che ella annuntia la cose future." Those same words (*tum discipulos suos inspiravit ut dicent*?) are followed, only in the Latin version, by a mention of Josephus: "Atque id, quod mirabile est, Christus obsidionem in Sabbato futuram, et exitium fame, ferroque a Gentilibus inferendum, atque stragem inauditam, captivitatem praeterea Iudaeorum in omnes Gentes, non aliter ante praescripsit, quam Iosephus scripserit post ruinam."

[124] *Ibid.*, p. 9: "Praeterea operae precium est audire, qua concione usus est et Iesus, et quisque discipulorum suorum ad auditores persuadendos. Date vestra omnia pauperibus, charissimos vestros respuite, porrigite genas percutienti, benefacite inimicis, vitam hanc omniaque eius oblectamenta pro nihilo habetote, abnegate vosmet ipsos, crucem hanc nostram, crucem terribilem sustinete, sequamini nos qua primum precamur. Si enim nos sequemini, procul dubio quaecunque a mortalibus mala existimantur, per omnem vitam subibitis. Haec illi. O suasionem dissuasionis omnis undique plenam. An putamus Demosthenem, Ciceronemque hac ratione quicquam persuadere cuiquam potuisset? Persuasit tamen concio illa, imo concionator subito multis, magnisque viris."

> This thing which is more miraculous than any miracle was done by God, since, as those who heard [Him] testify, Christ spoke not like the Scribes and the Pharisees, but as someone with authority.[125]

Christ's message was persuasive by means of the miraculous power of God. The gap between the human and the divine is presented here as a gap between human rhetoric and divine power. Even the best human rhetoric cannot overcome the limitations of the human intellect when it comes to truths which are new, unfamiliar, and contrary to common sense. One notes that this long discussion of the sermon on the mount as a miraculous event, contrary to common sense, is placed by Ficino not in the chapters on the teachings of Christ, where the emphasis is on ethics and virtues (although miracles are mentioned from time to time), but in his chapters on the Apostles. Thus, Ficino is characterizing the truth of Scripture as possessing new and superhuman qualities, and which does not need the false colouring of fine words or other human devices, by sending anyone who has doubts to read and re-read the books of the prophets, evangelists, and Apostles, and to study the commentaries of their followers which were written *eo tempore*, at that time.[126] This could have been a *locus classicus* for mentioning more of the Christian tradition, either patristic or scholastic. But instead, Ficino insists on reading the Scriptures alone, together with commentaries written by the followers of the Apostles.[127] He argues that in the Scriptures, both the Old and the New Testament, there is a perfect harmony between the different parts, which is a sign of their divine truth.[128] We would not

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[125] *Ibid.*: "A Deo factum est illud omni miraculo mirabilius, siquidem, ut testantur qui audierunt, loquebatur Iesus non sicut Scribae et Pharisaei, sed tanquam potestatem habens." The Italian version makes it even clearer. See *Della religione Christiana*… p. 36: "Questo è fatto da Dio piu miracoloso, che niun'altro miracolo: perche (come testimoniano quelli che piu volte udirono.) Giesu parlava non come gli scribi et pharisei: ma come colui, che possedeva in se potentia mirabile."

[126] *Ibid.*: "Si quis est qui dubitat, legat, et relegat diligenter Prophetarum, Evangelistarum, Apostolorumque libros, legat et eorum, qui illos eo tempore sicuti sunt, commentaria. Veritas huius rei protinus elucebit, in illis enim nova vis est, singularis quoque simplicitas sobrietasque et ardor, gravitas, profunditas, et maiestas. Quod quidem indicat neque divinam ab illis vim, flamamque abesse neque veritatem ipsam verborum fuco, neque vim divinam humanis machinis indigere."

[127] E.g., Dionysius the Areopagite; Ficino, *De Christians religione*… p. 11: "Haec ad Corinthios Timotheum vero sic admonuit…"

[128] Ficino, *De Christians religione*… p. 9: "Adde, quod in tot veteris, novique testamenti voluminibus, nihil usque nisi consonum reperitur, quod caeteris non est concessum, maximumque est divinae veritatis indicium. Habent scriptores illi nescio quid pium et augustum, atque id, quod mirabile est, inter se quidem commune a caeteris omnibus

find such a perfect harmony in any other authors, *id quod mirabile est, inter se quidem commune a caeteris omnibus penitus alienum quod significat omnibus illis Deum prae caeteris aspirasse*. For Ficino neither pagan philosophers nor the Fathers and Doctors of the Church displayed such admirable harmony, a clear sign of inspiration from God rather than coming from the human intellect. He thus takes a critical stance towards two established notions in the Christian world, strongly represented in contemporary scholastic theology: the importance of tradition and the authority of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. The expression *a caeteris omnibus* (to all other texts except the Scriptures) *penitus alienum* (such harmony is completely foreign) has a clear critical tone in this context. Ficino reminds his readers of the distinction between the perishable objects of the senses and the eternal objects of faith,[129] which is part of the distinction between man's terrestrial and eternal home.[130]

By the end of chapter eight he begins his comparison between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. He claims that if purity is the most appropriate quality of a religion and an indication that it is most divine, this religion is no doubt Christianity, since it does not include the worthless superstitions of the later Jews and the most impure absurdities of the Talmud, nor the unjust fables of the Gentiles, nor the abominable license of Muslims, as well as the absurdities of the Koran.[131] Another reason for the superiority of Christianity is its tolerance towards other religions, claims Ficino. The source of this tolerance is the negation of terrestrial profit and thus, unlike the Talmud and the Koran, which command believers to kill those who are against their faith and law, Christianity commands that its opponents should be taught with reason and then either be converted by preaching or else tolerated with

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penitus alienum quod significat omnibus illis Deum prae caeteris aspirasse. Quid dicemus ad hoc? quod cum caeteri omnes scriptores ambigant, et vacillent, illi tamen nihil usque dubitant, sed tanta, proh Deus omnipotens, certitudine loquuntur, quanta fortitudine durissima quaeque peregerunt." See sources on this issue quoted in the next chapter, n. 77 and context.

[129] *Ibid.*, p. 11: "Non contemplantibus nobis quae videntur, sed quae non videntur, quae enim videntur, temporalia sunt, quae autem non videntur, aeterna sunt." See Hbr 11, 1: "Ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων."

[130] *Ibid.*: "Scimus enim quod terrestris domus nostra husus habitationis dissolvatur, aedificationem ex Deo habemus, domum non manufacta, sed aeternam in coelis."

[131] *Ibid.*: "Denique si religionis maxime propria est puritas, haec certe divinissima est, quae neque viles posteriorum Iudaeorum superstitiones, et spurcissima Talmut deliramenta, neque obscoenas, et iniquas Gentilium fabulas, neque abominabilem Mahumethensium licentiam, et Alcorani ineptias admittit."

patience. This is why, as appeared most clearly among the first Christians, this religion not only removes sins but also extirpates them and persuades people to follow virtues.[132] Ficino introduces Christianity as an ideal of tolerance in contrast both to Judaism, which he identified, for obvious reasons, with the Talmud and late Judaism only, and to Islam. The only instrument of persuasion among those first Christians was the exercise of virtues and the performance of miracles.[133] He concludes the chapter with yet more emphasis on the centrality of God in Christianity: these virtues are not human, and only through God's grace and through turning one's back on this world can we reach the other, eternal, world.[134]

Christianity thus has many distinguishing marks: its tolerance, the purity of its worship of the one God, its ethical nature, and the agreement between many of its doctrines and the achievements of the greatest pre-Christian religious leaders and philosophers. All these things were already clear from my discussions of *prisca religio, praeparatio Evangelica*, and the sections on Christ himself. But what Ficino emphasizes in his chapters on the Apostles is what Christianity has added to all these elements. Spreading the Gospel of God who intervened in human history by becoming man Himself, and the mysteries He brought into the world, the Apostles work through the supernatural means of prophecies and miracles to introduce into religion the superhuman element which makes it perfect. This also explains why the teachings of Christ has made it possible for man not only to yearn for a union with God, but also to be able to achieve beatitude. But the way towards this also passes through realizing much more seriously than before the gap between divine and human affairs.

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[132] *Ibid.*: "quae neque terrena praemia, ut leges aliae, sed coelestia pollicetur, neque adversarios fidei legisque suae interfici iubet, quemadmodum iussit Talmut, et Alcoranum, sed vel ratione doceri, vel oratione converti, vel patientia tolerari. Quare ut in primitiis Christianorum re ipsa manifestissime apparuit, non modo amputat vitia, sed extirpat virtutesque persuadet operando priusquam suadendo."

[133] *Ibid.*: "Talis enim illorum conditio sorsque fuit, ut non aliter persuadere potuerint, quam et virtutes, et miracula exercendo."

[134] *Ibid.*: "Virtutes praeterea non ambitionis, aut voluptatis, aut tranquillitatis humanae, sed Dei solius gratia ardenter exercet, totumque hunc mundum pessundat, et pro nihilo habet, ut mundum alterum consequatur." See the Italian version, *Della Christiana religione…* p. 46: "Finalmente questa Religione esercita le virtu ardentemente: non a fine d'ambitione, o piacere, o riposo humano. ma solo ha per suo fine Iddio, et per acquistare l'altro mondo, questo mondo niente stima."

We note that in the chapters on Christ's ministry, the miraculous element is prominent only in the story of the Incarnation, and is played down in the rest of the story of his teachings. There the emphasis is on his image as a moral teacher who brings men to God through the Christian virtues. It is in the chapters on the Apostles that the supernatural element, miracles and prophecies, is constantly emphasized. Ficino does not explain this. One possible suggestion is that, when he speaks about Christ, his divinity is in no doubt, and what one should emphasize is the human side of his teachings. The Apostles, on the other hand, were human, and they were trying to spread the Gospel among human beings most of whom had not even met Christ. Moral teachings are not lacking in the *Epistles*, just as the miraculous is not lacking in the *Gospels* and *Acts*, but to propagate a new religion with a mysterious element, and to do it by the agency of humans, a greater use of supernatural means was required. Ficino does emphasize his own explanation for the use of the supernatural by the Apostles and their followers. As we have seen, the new religion was not to be spread, like former religions, by the merely human means of persuasion or force. But miracles and prophecies are no less prominent in the life and activities of Christ himself, and there Ficino lays far less emphasis on them.

f. *The Decline of the Christian World and Ficino's Proposals for Renewal*

We have already seen in the discussion of Ficino's idea of *prisca religio* that he regards the separation between kings and priests as one of the reasons for the decline of the Christian world and its institutions.[135]

Ficino uses very strong words to describe what happened as a result of the separation of wisdom and religion: holiness was torn to pieces by dogs. Who were those dogs? They must be some kind of *later* Christians or Jews, since their doctrine formerly reflected the unity of wisdom and religion. But the word *doctrina* is used here in a Christian context and refers to the ancient bishops and presbyters. Ficino is therefore thinking

[135] See above n. 25 and context; and the passage quoted there from *De Christiana religione*… p. 1 which I repeat here: "Quanta denique et quam vera doctrina in priscis Christianorum episcopis, presbyterisque quis nesciat? O felicia secula, quae divinam hanc sapientiae, religionisque copulam, praesertim apud Hebraeos, Christianosque integram servavistis. O secula tandem nimium infelicia, quando Palladis, Themidisque (id est, sapientiae et honestatis) et separatio divortium miserabile contigit. Proh nephas, sic datum est sanctum canibus lacerandum."

of a profound religious or spiritual crisis in post-Apostolic Christianity caused by this separation:

> Doctrine, for the most part was transferred to profane people, where it became largely an instrument of iniquity and impudence, and should be called malice rather than knowledge. But the most precious pearls of religion are often dealt with by ignorant people, who trample on them as if they were pigs. Indeed [this doctrine] often seems worthy of being called the concern and superstition of ignorant and sluggish people rather than religion. Thus, they do not genuinely understand the truth which, like divine [truth], illuminates the eyes of believers alone; nor do they, as far as it is in their power, properly worship even God, just as they perform holy [rites] absolutely ignorant of divine and human things. How long will we endure this unfortunate and miserable fate of this Iron Age? O men, citizens of the celestial native land and residents of earth, let us at some time liberate—I beg you—philosophy, the sacred gift of God, from impiety if we can—but we can if we want to—let us to the best of our ability redeem sacred religion from detestable ignorance.[136]

Why does Ficino call those to whom most of the doctrine was tranferred "profane" or *secolari* in the Italian version?[137] Because they are ignorant and do not understand the truth, and they perform holy rites with no knowledge whatsoever of divine and human things. Is this an attack on certain ignorant priests who turn religion into superstition? I do not think so. Ficino is describing what he regards as the unfortunate and miserable fate of his own times, describing them in the strong expression 'Iron Age'. How far we are from the mythical image of Medicean Florence as a Golden Age. The subtext of his critique here is obviously Matthew 7, 6: *Nolite dare sanctum canibus, necque mittatis margaritas vestras ante porcos, ne forte conculcent eas pedibus suis et conversi dirumpant*

[136] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 1: "Doctrina enim magna ex parte ad prophanos translata est, unde ut plurimum iniquitatis evasit et lasciviae instrumentum, ac malitia dicenda est potius, quam scientia. Margaritae autem religionis preciosissimae saepe tractantur ab ignorantibus, atque ab his tanquam suibus conculcantur. Saepe enim iners ignorantum ignavorumque cura superstitio potius, quam religio appellanda videtur. Ita neque illi sincere veritatem intelligunt, quae tanquam divina solis piorum oculis illucescit, neque isti, quantum in eis est, recte vel Deum colunt, ut sacra gubernant, divinarum humanarumque rerum prorsus ignari. Quandiu duram et miserabilem hanc ferrei seculi sortem sustinebimus? O viri coelestis patriae cives, incolaeque terrae, liberemus obsecro quandoque philosophiam, sacrum Dei munus, ab impietate, si possumus, possumus autem, si volumus, religionem sanctam pro viribus ab execrabili inscit⟨i⟩a redimamus." Here we see again the classical pair *divinae humanaeque res*. We also have a hint of Augustine's heavenly and earthly cities.

[137] Ficino, *Della religione Christiana*… p. 7: "Cosi fu data a'cani a lacerare la cosa santa: perche la dottrina in gran parte si transferi ne secolari."

vos. He is calling for the liberation of philosophy—the sacred gift of God—from impiety, and of sacred religion from ignorance.[138]

I think that Ficino's words against the Peripatetics in a letter to Ioannes Pannonius are particularly relevant here.[139] To be sure, there are many detailed and to some extent critical discussions of different philosophical schools throughout his *Theologia platonica*, especially in the eleventh book;[140] but those discussions are more philosophical and technical, and they do not deal with the state of religion and philosophy.[141] When Ficino calls for the liberation of philosophy in the context of a spiritual crisis, I think it is clear that he is thinking of a liberation from Aristotelian philosophy and its connections to Christianity or, in other words, scholastic theology. What interests him is the connection between philosophy/philosophers and religion/priests:

> I therefore encourage and beg them all, especially philosophers, to embrace and be completely occupied with religion; and [I encourage and beg] priests to devote themselves diligently to the study of legitimate wisdom. I do not know how far I have progressed or will progress in this matter; nevertheless, I will not cease to try, placing my trust not in my meagre talent but rather in God's mercy and power.[142]

Ficino encourages philosophers to get more involved in religion, giving themselves to it *penitus*, completely—*interamente* in the Italian version[143]—and priests to study legitimate wisdom. What, however, does

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[138] *Ibid.*: "Sommamente priego che qualche volta la philosophia, dono sacro d'Iddio, dalla impietà, se in alcun modo si puo, liberiamo." That philosophy as a gift of God is a clear echo of Plato, *Timaeus*, 47a7–b2: "ἐξ ὧν ἐπορισάμεθα φιλοσοφίας γένος, οὗ μεῖζον ἀγαθον οὔτ' ἦλθεν οὔτε ἥξει ποτὲ τῷ θνητῷ γένει δωρηθὲν ἐκ θεῶν." Cicero echoes this expression in *Academicus primus* 7; *Tusculanae* I, 64; *De amicitia* 20; *De legibus* I, 58. For the Medici myth see Bullard, *Lorenzo Il Magnifico*… especially chapter one.

[139] Ficino, *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, p. 872: "… et Peripatetici, id est, Philosophi omnes admoneantur non esse de religione tanque de anilibus fabulis sentiendum. Totus enim terrarum orbis a Peripateticis occupatus in duas plurimum divisus est sectas, Alexandrinam et Averroicam. Illi quidem intellectum nostrum esse mortalem existimant, hi vero unicum esse contendunt. Utrique religionem omnem funditus aeque tollunt."

[140] Ficino, *Theologia platonica*… vol. 3, pp. 198–330.

[141] Another discussion can be found in Ficino's preface to his Plotinus translations. See *Opera omnia*… vol. 2, pp. 1537–1538.

[142] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 1: "Hortor igitur omnes, atque precor, philosophos quidem, ut religionem vel capessant penitus, vel attingant: sacerdotes autem, ut legitimae sapientiae studiis diligenter incumbant. Ego quantum hac in re vel profecerim, vel profecturus sim, nescio, tentavi tamen et tentare non desinam, non meo quidem ingeniolo, sed Dei clementiae viribusque confisus."

[143] Ficino, *Della religione Christiana*… p. 8: "… priego i filosofi in prima, che la religione abbraccino interamente…"

he mean by the adverb *penitus* and by the phrase "legitimate wisdom"?

This is an opportune moment to discuss Ficino's model for philosophy and religion in the context of a spiritual crisis. On the one hand, he is calling for the replacement of the Aristotelian foundation of scholastic theology by an ancient Neoplatonic theology, which should serve as *praeambula fidei*, similar to Augustine's model;[144] this is what he regards as the "legitimate wisdom". On the other hand, by relying on the myth of the ancient connection between philosophy and religion, philosophers and priests, he is calling for the reestablishment of a deep connection between philosophy—that is, the legitimate wisdom of the ancient Neoplatonic theology—and religion. This will produce, he believes, a *profunditas* in contrast to the empty ceremonies of present day religion. But in order to understand what Ficino means by this reconnection, it is important to understand what religion or priests mean to him. We should remember that he wrote this book shortly after he himself became a priest, with the help of Lorenzo.[145]

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[144] See, e.g., Ficino's proem to the *Theologia platonica*… vol. 1, pp. 8–10: "Praesertim cum Plato de his ita sentiat, ut Aurelius Augustinus eum, tamquam christianae veritati omnium proximum, ex omni philosophorum numero elegerit imitandum, asserueritque Platonicos mutatis paucis christianos fore. Ego vero, cum iampridem Aureliana auctoritate fretus summaque in genus humanum caritate adductus Platonis ipsius simulacrum quoddam christianae veritati simillimum exprimere statuissem, ad illa quae dixi duo prae ceteris diligenter incubui, ideoque universum opus *Platonicam Theologiam de immortalitate animorum* inscribendum esse censui." See also Ficino's letter to Pico regarding Epicurus, Averroes, and Plato in relation to Christianity, in his *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, p. 930: "Scribis amice quam optime, (quod mihi omnium est gratissimum) te multis quotidie suadere, ac iam persuasisse nonnullis, ut epicurea impietate relicta, vel Averroica quadam opinione posthabita, piam de anima Deoque sequantur Platonis nostri sententiam. Per quam sane quasi mediam quandam viam, Christianam pietatem denique consequantur." Plato's idea of the immortality of the soul is a commonplace in Augustine. See e.g., *De civitate Dei* I, 22; XIII, 16; XXII, 26. In his *Epistle* CIV (*ad Nectarium*) Augustine contrasts the Epicureans, who deny immortality, with the Socratics who support it, and Plato figures largely in the list. Plato and the Platonists (in our terms Neoplatonists) always exercised a great influence on Augustine, and Plato especially was regarded by him as a precursor of Christianity. See e.g., Book XIII of *De civitate Dei*, chapters 1–13, espesially chapter 11, where Augustine repeats the Christian tradition that Plato was a pupil of Jeremiah in Egypt.

[145] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… pp. 1–2 (dedication to Lorenzo): "Tu [Laurentius] nuper volens philosophandi studium in me, quoad posses, sicut in aliis nonnullis consuevisti, cum pietatis officio copulare. Marsilium Ficinum tuum sacerdotio, et quidem honorifice, decorasti. Utinam nunquam mihi ipse defuerim aut desim quando quidem Dei ipsius, Medicumque favor, et auxilium nunquam defuit. Ut autem divinam mihi gratiam magis conciliarem, tibique gratificarer, et mihi ipse non deessem, cum primum sacerdotii sacris initiatus sum, opus de Christiana religione composui, quod quidem tibi

As we have seen,[146] the proem to Italian version of *De Christiana religione* is a more popular version of the first chapter of the *Theologia platonica*, in which religion replaces the notion of the eternity of the soul. The idea of the miserable condition of mankind is explained in much more detail here, with examples of *corporis imbecillitas* and without all the names of ancient philosopers and schools. Ficino uses simpler images to describe the condition of man on earth and compares man to the heavenly spirits on account of his rational nature. He emphasizes themes which will be discussed later in the text, such as the importance of religion as worship of God, and introduces his aims in writing this text: to confirm and defend Christianity as the true religion. It is here that Ficino explains his reason for translating the work into the vernacular:

> Since religion is a common gift and virtue, it belongs to everyone; it therefore seemed to me suitable to compose the above-mentioned book not only in Latin but also in Italian, so that a book on a universal virtue would be common to many.

Ficino is aware of the need to transmit his ideas regarding the Christian religion to as many readers as possible. He wrote this book in order to confirm and defend Christianity at a time, I believe, which for him and for many others was a period of spiritual crisis. Religion is not like philosophy, for instance, in which various speculative discussions take place. In religion, the questions which need to be discussed concern matters of life and death, and such questions are common to everyone. Ficino's awareness of the need to translate and disseminate this book is part of the new humanist theology, in which dissemination played an important role, as we have seen in the chapter on humanist sermons.

It is difficult for an author who writes for a wide public which consists of people with a very different social and educational background to predict with any degree of precision which parts of his book would appeal to which class of readers. Ficino does not, of course, indicate which aspects of his discussion should appeal to which class of readers. One can only guess. I assume that some of the more abstruse

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huius meae professionis authori, praecipuoque tum sapientiae alumno, tum pietatis cultori censui dedicandum." See also Peter Serracino-Inglott, 'Ficino The Priest', in Allen, Rees, and Davies [eds.], *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology*… pp. 1–13.

[146] Notes 27–33 and context. Because of the importance of the passage discussed there, I repeat it, and my comments on it, here as well; but I leave out here the notes on detail, which can be consulted in the previous section.

Neoplatonic arguments were directed mainly at Ficino's own circle, at humanists and their pupils, and educated aristocrats like Lorenzo. Even here, many of the new ideas could be understood on a simpler level, and without a full appreciation of the background, by many intelligent ordinary readers. I suspect that the discussions of *prisca theologia*, beside being part of Ficino's own conception of the continuity and break in the history of religion, may also be directed at professional theologians such as Caroli. The connection which Ficino establishes between *prisca theologia* and early Platonism, and between early Christianity and late Platonism, may serve as an indication to them that Platonism is more relevant to the understanding of Christianity and of religion in general than the traditional Aristotelianism of the scholastics. I think, however, that it would be rash to assume that Ficino's emphasis on miracles and prophecies in the early history of Christianity is directed mainly at his less educated readers. As we have seen in section e above, it was God's purpose to disseminate the new religion even among learned men by means of prophecies and miracles. This was not an accident. It was necessary to demonstrate, especially to those who had not had a direct experience of Christ's life, ministry, death and resurrection, that the new religion was not merely a continuation of *prisca theologia*, but the result of a miraculous divine intervention which had changed the course of history and perfected the nature of religion.

As we have seen, for Ficino the Christian religion is based upon God's power and revelation, represented to us by miracles and prophecies, and expressed in the Scriptures. He criticizes the present state of religion, in which Christianity has become a matter of habit. This present state, which reflects the spiritual crisis of the age, is characterized by its distance both from the practical and vivid dimension of early Christianity and from the ancient pre-revelation theology, which could give the Christian truth a pre-history through its similarity to the ancient theology, which was an essential part of natural religion since the beginning of human history.

Humanist theology, just like patristic and scholastic theology, presents a tension between pagan and Christian sources, or between *humanae litterae* and *sacrae litterae*; this tension includes both criticism and negation but also synthesis. Still, there is an important difference between scholastic and humanist theology related both to the growing knowledge of ancient classical sources and to the religious crisis which requires new solutions. This produced a new balance and emphasis in humanist theology. The pagan ancient theology replaces here Aris-

totelianism, and for Ficino, it also gives historical and philosophical profundity to Christianity. Such a profundity does not constitute a validation of Christianity. It is for the human intellect of believers. A good example for this can be found in the opening lines of Ficino's letter to his German student and friend Martin Prenninger:

> Divine Iamblichus describes, according to the opinion of the Egyptians, two ways towards happiness: one philosophical and the other priestly; the first [is] more open to discovering happiness, the second [is a] shorter [way] to achieve the goal. The Peripatetic and similar philosophers chose mainly the first way, while the religious people marched most of all along the second way. Our Plato had bound together admirably both ways into one, and anywhere he is religious as well as philosopher, fine disputer, pious priest, eloquent speaker. Wherefore, if you would follow long enough the foot-tracks of the divine Plato, just as you had begun, you would both find happiness with God as a director and achieve the same [happiness] with God as a leader, especially since our Plato at the same time pursues the Mosaic law and foretells the Christian law by using Pythagorean and Socratic reasons.[147]

Once again we see the supreme status of Plato among the ancient pagan theologians; his figure is no doubt Ficino's model for a perfect combination of a religious and a philosopher. The Peripatetic philosophers, as we have seen in the letter to Ioannes Pannonius, represent those philosophers who opposed religion, and took the philosophical path. The two ways towards happiness are represented through a reference to Iamblichus, who followed the opinion of the Egyptians. Thus, we have here the Egyptians, some Peripatetic and similar philosophers, religious people, and then Plato, the perfect combination of the two ways. The historical place of Plao is between Moses and Christ. This

[147] Edited by Klibansky in his *The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition*… p. 45: "Duas ad felicitatem vias divinus Iamblicus Aegyptiorum mente describit, alteram philosophicam, alteram sacerdotiam: illam quidem apertiorem ad felicitatem inveniendam, hanc vero breviorem ad consequendam. Illam imprimis elegerunt Peripatetici similesque philosophi, hanc maxime populus religiosus incedit. Plato noster utramque viam mirabiliter coniunxit in unum et ubique religiosus est pariter atque philosophus, disputator subtilis, pius sacerdos, facundus orator. Quamobrem, si divi Platonis vestigia, sicut coepisti, diutius prosequaris, felicitatem et invenies indice Deo et Deo duce consequeris eandem, praesertim quia Plato noster una cum rationibus Pythagoricis atque Socraticis legem sectatur Mosaycam auguraturque Christianam." For the story of Plato's connecting Socratic and Pythagorean doctrines, see Cicero, *De republica* I, 15–16; *De Finibus* V, 87; and the discussion regarding the background of this idea in John Glucker, 'Socrates in the Academic Books and Other Ciceronian Works', in Brad Inwood and Jaap Mansfeld [eds.], *Assent and Argument—Studies in Cicero's Academic Books* (Leiden 1997), pp. 58–88; especially 83–87.

is why he could pursue the Mosaic law and forestall the Christian law by using two philosophical-theological systems: the Pythagorean and the Socratic. Theologically speaking, it is clear that for Ficino, Plato as a pagan is far below Moses and Christ; his use of Pythagorean and Socratic doctrines, which derived from a human mind, helped him to appreciate the Mosaic law (of which he also learned from the prophet Jeremiah) and to forestall the Christian law; but Plato, or any other ancient pagan theologian, can never validate Christianity, which was founded upon revelation.

Let me now examine another case of Ficino relying on Plato in a criticism of a phenomenon occurring in his own time, where the Aristotelian manner of philosophy is implicitly but clearly criticized.

In the third chapter (entitled: *Caveant adolescentes, ne facile de religione sententiam ferant*) Ficino deals with religion's place in the life of the individual. He claims, following Plato, that there are two ages in man's life in which he is religious by nature: childhood and senility.[148] He argues that children are born religious, but when they grow up they demand to understand the causes and reasons of individual things. And if they start at that age, they either strive to attain these studies or engage in those conversations which carefully examine the reasons of things, almost as if they did not want to assert anything unless they perceived its reason.[149] What are those studies or conversations full of causes and reasons? Obviously, what was considered to be philosophy at that time: Aristotelianism, in its scholastic colouring. Those studies and conversations have some very bad effects on certain youths:

> First, to a large degree, they cast religion away behind their backs unless perhaps they commit themselves to the laws and to the advice of older men. Since the most secret principles of divine things are scarcely

[148] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 3: "Et si homo natura in qualibet aetate, exceptis paucissimis et illis quidem depravatis, religiosus est, duae tamen aetates, ut Plato scribit [probably *Laws* X 887d–888a, where the young are described as more open to the teachings about the gods; and *Republic* I 330a4ff., where Cephalus states that it is in old age that people return to beliefs in Hades and life after death], religiosiores sunt, pueritia videlicet, et senectus." But see also Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, I, 4, 11: "… τὸ τε πᾶν γένος ἀνθρώπων παιδείαν παιδεύεσθαι ἔνθεον καὶ εὐσεβῆ φέρειν τε μανθάνειν γενναίως…"

[149] *Ibid.*: "Nam pueri religiosi nascuntur, atque educantur, et in religione firmissimi permanent, quousque in adolenscentia ratio excitetur, quae sua natura singularum rerum causas rationesque requirit, si in hac aetate, aut ea studia capessant, aut in eos sermones incidant, quibus diligenter rerum causae perquirantur, incipiunt quasi nihil velle asseverare, nisi cui, is ipsi rationem perspexerint."

> perceived in the end after a long period of time by means of the most careful diligence by a mind which has been purified, those youngsters do not yet attain these principles; and since they assert almost nothing whose reason they do not see, if they trust to their own judgment, they in a certain manner neglect religion. Some youths, disposed to this opinion because of their arrogance and lack of self-restraint, dedicated themselves to Aristippian pleasures, finally thinking about religion as nothing more than old wives' tales.[150]

Let us recall Ficino's letter to Ioannes Pannonius about the Peripatetic philosophers most hostile to religion: Averroes and Alexander.[151] What we have in our passage, which is part of a work intended for publication, is only one ancient name: Aristippus, the disciple of Socrates who was regarded as the founder of the Cyrenaic school, for which immediate pleasure was the only end of action. This is typical of *De Christiana religione* in general: even when a contemporary situation or philosophical debate is hinted to, the only names mentioned are usually classical ones. This is also true of the following passage. As against the young people described in our last passage, who were misled by wrong philosophical approaches, there are some other youths who:

> On account of their mildness and modesty, purify their mind from the senses in the Pythagorean manner with moral, natural, mathematical, and metaphysical teachings, so that they do not, as do those abovementioned [youths], suddenly direct their hitherto bleary eyes towards the divine sun and are dazzled, but rather proceed gradually. Firstly, they see the divine light in moral things, like the light of the sun on earth. Secondly, they perceive it in natural things, like [the light of the sun] in water. Thirdly, they perceive it in mathematical things, like [the light of the sun] in the moon. Fourthly, they perceive [the divine light] clearly and beneficially in metaphysical things, like [the light of the sun] in the sun itself, both supercelestial and celestial.[152]

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[150] *Ibid.*: "Tunc primum religionem magna ex parte post tergum abiiciunt, nisi forte legibus, seniorumque consilio se committant. Quia divinorum occultissimae rationes longo vix tandem tempore exquisitissima diligentia purgata mente perspiciuntur. Adolescentes illi rationes huiusmodi nondum attingunt, et quia nihil ferme asserunt, cuius non videant rationem, si proprio confidant iudicio, religionem quodammodo negligunt. Nonnulli in hac opinione constituti propter superbiam incontinentiamque, Aristippicis voluptatibus sese dedunt, tandem nihil amplius de religione, nisi tanquam de anilibus fabulis cogitantes." For Aristippus see, e.g., Eusebius, *Preaparatio Evangelica*, I, 8, 8: "Ἀρίστιππος ὁ Κυρηναῖος τέλος ἀγαθῶν τὴν ἡδονήν, κακῶν δὲ τὴν ἀλγηδόνα"; Gentile [ed.], *Marsilio Ficino, Lettere I*… p. 202: "Irationalis partis sunt acumen sensuum eorumque voluptates. Aristippus censuit in ambobus summum esse bonum…"

[151] See n. 139 above.

[152] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 3: "Alii vero propter mansuetudinem et mod-

One notices again that a certain type of young people who are Ficino's contemporaries are still described in terms of an ancient school of philosophy. The Pythagorean school,[153] whose influence on Plato has already been mentioned,[154] seems to Ficino more sympathetic to religion than other ancient philosophical sects. It prescribes a gradual progress of learning, which enables us to purify our minds from the contamination of the senses. Those who purify themselves in such manner are called by Orpheus legitimate priests of the Muses; and when they are in a more mature age, they feel much better towards religion.[155] Ficino cites many passages in Plato where the same idea is expressed.[156] Plato warns young men not to hold an opinion on divine matters rashly, but rather to believe in the laws until they are instructed by age itself. They can acieve this either by the four stages he has described, or by experience, or by a certain separation of the soul from the body, which occurs when we reach moderate old age. At this point the soul is able to distinguish more clearly things which are separated from bodies.[157] Ficino reminds us that wisdom is not natural in young men and that there is nothing more dangerous, either in judgment or in

estiam, Pythagoreo ritu mentem purgant a sensibus, per morales, physicas, mathematicas, metaphysicas disciplinas, ne tanquam superiores illi, lippos adhuc occulos in divinum Solem subito dirigentes, caligari cogantur, sed gradatim progredientes. Primo lumen divinum in moralibus tanquam solis lumen in terra prospiciant. Secundo in physicis tanquam in aqua. Tertio in mathematicis tanquam in Luna. Quarto metaphysicis tanquam in ipso Sole tam supercoelesti, quam coelesti perspicue salubriterque perspiciant."

[153] See the discussion of Christopher S. Celenza, 'Pythagoras in the Renaissance', in *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999), pp. 667–711; see also his *Piety and Pythagoras*…

[154] See n. 147 above and its context.

[155] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 3: "Hos appellat Orpheus musarum legitimos sacerdotes, qui tandem in aetate maturiore de religione sentiunt multo melius…"

[156] *Ibid.*: "… quemadmodum legimus apud Platonem in Epistola ad regem Dionysium, in Phaedro, in primo de republica, in decimo legum."

[157] *Ibid.*: "Monet autem iuvenes divinus Plato, ne temere divinis sententiam ferant sed credant legibus, donec aetas ipsa doceat, vel per eos disciplinarum gradus, quos narravimus, vel per experientiam, vel per quandam animi a corpore separationem, quam moderata senectus adducit, ut anima in ea aetate res a corporibus separatas, quasi e proximo videns clarius discernat, quam consueverit [a paraphrase of *Laws* X 888a7–d5]." It is interesting that in discussing a Pythagorean manner of achieving an understanding of divine matters, Ficino quotes Platonic works as his sources. This, however, is part of a tradition going back at least to the age of Cicero, according to which many of the positive doctrines of Plato, even where they are expressed by Socrates, were derived from Pythagoreanism. See, e.g., Cicero, *De republica* I, 16.

action, than rash ignorance and ignorant rashness;[158] and he approves of wisdom without rashness: *Sapientia sine audacia prodest quidem*….[159]

On the face of it what we have here is some advice on the moral education of the young, with reference to a few classical sources. In fact, the classical sources and references all belong to what Ficino regards as model religious figures: Orpheus, the Pythagoreans, and Plato. What corrupts the youth of the age—Ficino's own age—and leads them from seeking natural causes and reasons to hedonism is nothing less than the Aristotelian education in the scholastic tradition.

In chapter nine, Ficino maintains that the common religion (most probably *prisca religio*) was founded solely on God's power and not on any human or natural causes, or on the common human nature of the species. Ficino distinguishes between astrology, which is merely a natural science, and the prophecies of the prophets and Sibyls regarding the coming of Christ, which were divinely inspired.[160] One notes that these prophecies had existed *ab initio mundi*, since the beginning of the world.[161] This is how Ficino connects the Christian truth to the pre-revelation divine history of natural religion, represented both by ancient prophets and theologians, which were part of the *prisca theologia*. Ficino thus presents the history of both the pre- and post-revelation divine nature of Christianity:

> No astrologer would ever dare to announce that this [Christian religion] is about to cease. This [religion] does not depend on the temporal motion of the heavens, but rather on the eternal stability of God. This

[158] *Ibid.*: "Meminisse vero semper oportet, neque posse in iuvenibus secundum naturam sapientiam esse, neque quicquam vel in iudicando, vel in agendo periculosius esse, quam audacem ignorantiam, et audaciam ignorantem."

[159] *Ibid.*

[160] *Ibid.*, p. 12: "In praesentia vero Christianam legem non esse, servarique a fato quodam syderum, breviter sic ostendimus. Adventus Christi tanquam divinus ab initio mundi praedictus a Prophetis, Sybillisque fuit, non in Astrologia peritis, sed divinitus inspiratis." As to prophecies of Christ *ab initio mundi*, see *Hebrews* 4, 1–10; II Cor 4, 6. Enoch and Noah are mentioned for their faith in God at *Hebrews* 11, 5–7. Enoch is described as prophesying the coming of Christ at Jude 14–15 (citing the apocryphal book of Enoch). As to Melchizedek as a pre-figuration of Christ, see *Hebrews* 7, 11–17. See also the description of Augustine, already cited in n. 19; Augustine, *Retractationes* I, XIII: "Nam res ipsa, quae nunc christiana religio nuncupatur, erat et apud antiquos nec defuit ab initio generis humani, quousque ipse Christus veniret in carne, unde vera religio, quae iam erat, coepit appellari christiana."

[161] Ficino probably regards the first generations of men, who in the Book of Genesis conduct direct conversations with God, as prophets, and God's addressing them as revelations. Special examples are Enoch, who walked with God (*Genesis* 5, 22–24), and Noah, who also walked with God (*Genesis* 6, 9).

> [religion], from the beginning of the world until the time of the Emperor Augustus, consisted in the proclamations of prophets, in the hope of nations, in things imaging the divine. From then up to our own time [this religion] has already lasted for 1474 years, although the heavens and earth were against it.[162]

Ficino then concludes this chapter with yet another criticism of those who have responsibility for managing the affairs of Christianity:

> This religion can therefore never be destroyed. It has God as its defender and protector, even if it is badly administered by its own members and cruelly attacked by its enemies. Indeed, it stands because of God, who guides it—this [religion] which is as badly treated by its own members as it is by outsiders. Furthermore, if Christians succeed in human affairs, its ceremonies will not cease; if many adverse things happen, this religion will still arise and be perfected. For [this religion], which was born and grew up with a certain extreme and lasting opposition, will necessarily be nourished and without doubt be fulfilled in the same [adversity].[163]

Who are those bad administrators of Christianity? We might think of the well-known humanistic *topos* of the hypocrisy of monks; but here the emphasis is not on monks or any churchmen, but rather those who administer the religion at all levels. Despite these bad human leaders and administrators, God himself defends Christianity and would never allow it to be destroyed. Yet the danger of destruction appears as a clear sign of the crisis, not only on the spiritual level but also on the political level, which had loomed over Italy since the fall of Constantinopol in 1453.[164]

The eternity of Christianity is thus secured by its divine nature, but its purity is not secure against the corruption which Ficino describes.

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[162] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… p. 12: "Neque audeat Astrologus aliquis aliquando eam [Christiana religio] defecturam pronunciare, quae non a temporali coelorum motu, sed ab aeterna Dei stabilitate dependet, quae ab initio mundi usque ad Octaviani Imperatoris tempora in Prophetarum praeconiis populorumque expectatione, rerum similitudine constitit. Deinde usque ad nos annos iam mille et quadrigentos septuagintaque et quatuor, invitis coelis, terrisque perdurat."

[163] *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13: "Nunquam igitur poterit religio haec aboleri, quae Deum vindicem habet, atque custodem, etiam si male administretur a suis, et crudeliter impugnetur ab hostibus, stat enim regente Deo, quae non minus a suis male tractatur, quam alienis. Denique si prospere Christianis res humanae succedent, ceremoniae non cessabunt, si adversa multa contingent, crescet tandem haec religio, atque perficietur. Nam cum extrema quadam, et diuturna adversitate quondam orta, adultaque fuerit, eadem necessario nutrietur, ac prorsus implebitur."

[164] See, e.g., Pertusi [ed.], *La caduta di Constatinopoli*…; Hankins, 'Renaissance Crusaders…'

One of his reasons for offering a new theology is to cure Christianity of such a corruption.

But Ficino is writing against the background of his own age, and is offering his theology as an aid to overcoming the crisis. Let us look at some comments he makes which have a more contemporary context.

We have already seen that miracles play a very important role in Ficino's humanist theology. In chapter ten (entitled: *Christi authoritas absque miraculis minime fuit*)[165] he presents in more detail the importance not only of scriptural miracles but also of miracles described by post-biblical authors—and more surprisingly, even contemporary miracles. He begins by criticizing those who demand new miracles every day in order to confirm the Christian faith and who express doubts about every miraculous sign.[166] It is enough for us to know, he argues, that the world, had begun and survived not without some very clear miracles.[167] Regarding Christ's miracles, there is agreement between Gentiles, Jews, and Muslims.[168] In front of many thousands of people, Christ's disciples performed miracles every day in various places.[169] Ficino adduces evidence of miraculous omens which occurred in the time of Christ, especially when He was suffering on the cross, by citing Macrobius, Eusebius, Phlegon of Tralles, Josephus, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and Lactantius.[170] He concludes that there was clearly an eclipse when

[165] Ficino, *De Christiana religione*… pp. 13–15.

[166] *Ibid.*, p. 13: "Sed arguendi acriter illi mihi videntur, magnanime Laurenti, qui quotidie tam pertinaciter, quam imprudenter nova ad fidem Christi confirmandam miracula exigunt. Si enim rara sunt, prodigia sunt, si frequentissime fierent, vel artificiosa, vel naturalia videntur." *Prodigium* in classical Latin is an unusual occurrence such as the birth of a two-headed animal, rivers running with blood in peace times, various places struck by lightning at exactly the same minute, rains of milk, and the like. They signify that the gods are likely to interfere in human affairs. Books *De prodigiis* existed in antiquity, and Phlegon's Περὶ μακροβίων καὶ θαυμασίων, to which Ficino refers here (see n. 170 below), is a representative of this genre.

[167] *Ibid.*: "Sufficiat nobis scire, mundum olim non absque manifestis miraculis tam miraculose, tam miraculosa instituta, et opera coepisse, et pertulisse."

[168] *Ibid.*: "Quid quod Christum fecisse miracula, Gentiles, Iudaei, Mahumethenses nobis concesserunt."

[169] *Ibid.*: "Miracula de stella ab Oriente, eclypsi Solis, ac terrae motu, templique scissione, et alia multa, multis hominum milibus manifesta discipuli Christi tam in Iudea, quam alibi palam quotidie praedicabant, atque scribebant."

[170] *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14. Yet in the Italian version there are further authors and quotations which do not appear in the Latin version. After the quotation from Macrobius (the last words are: *praestat Herodis porcum esse quam filium* on p. 13) we find in the Italian version, *Delle Christiana religione*… p. 52: "Oltra questo Origene nel libro contro a Celso [I, 59] scrive: havere letto nel libro di Cheremone Stoico, delle Comete, qualche volta per quelle significarsi cose prospere et salutari. Quale dice essere stata quella che appari

Christ was crucified and that this miracle occurred solely for the sake of Christ.[171] He continues with quotations from Paul which present a sharp contrast between human language and wisdom, on the one hand, and God's power, on the other. The practical aspect of faith, in which God's power represents both wisdom and action, is evident here.[172] He appeals again to those who demand miracles and argues that in order to see them they have first to be worthy of this privilege.[173] How can they expect to see miracles in their miserable condition, weighed down by terrestrial matter instead of improving themselves and ascending to the higher stages of virtue and thus to sublime matters? Expecting miracles is pointless without this process of improvement, that is, purifying oneself from the contamination of the body and concentrating on the soul through levels of virtue, claims Ficino.[174] Only by means of

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nel tempo d'Ottaviano, della quale afferma Origene essere fatta storia da Cheremone, et aggiugne che i Caldei havendo considerata questa cometa, et avedutosi che i loro demonii erono di nuovo debilitati, andorono in Giudea per adorare uno piu degno de loro demonii. Et non è maraviglia che i Caldei di questo s'avedessino: imperoche nella medesima regione orientale (come testimonia Origene) et nella medesima città, onde furono i Magi, secondo alcuni fu il propheta Balaam, il quale predisse dovere surgere il Messia come verga d'Isdrael, quando nuova stella a Iacob nascessi [Nm 24, 17]; con queste parole. Nascerà stella di Iacob et surgerà la verga d'Isdrael: Ancora Calcidio perfetto Platonico scrive [*Commentarius* XCVI–XCVII] essere manifesto per la storia santa, che per nascimento antico d'una certa stella era significato il discendere di Dio: et questo da Caldei essere notato; i quali honorarono Iddio di nuovo nato. E utile udir Plinio [*Historia Naturalis* II, 191] cosi parlante del tremuoto."

[171] *Ibid.*, p. 14: "Eclypsis autem fuit, non enim licebat tunc in re tam manifesta mentiri, nam in eodem seculo, et apud eosdem praedicata, scriptaque sunt, in quo, et apud quos miracula eiusmodi evenisse narrantur. Solius autem Christi gratia miraculum illud factum est in coelo." For miracles happening at the crucifixion and because of it see Mt 27, 45–54 and parallels. The phrase *Christi gratia* is translated in the Italian version, *Delle Christiana religione*… p. 55, as *amore di Christo*.

[172] *Ibid.*: "Docet nos magnus Paulus, qualis illa fuerit Apostolorum praedicatio, qua populi multi convertebantur, nam Corinthiis inquit: Ego fratres cum venissem ad vos, veni non in sublimitate sermonis, aut sapientiae, annuncians vobis testimonium Christi. Non enim iudicavi me scire aliquid inter vos, nisi Iesum Christum, et hunc crucifixum, et ego in infirmitate, et timore, et tremore multo fui apud vos, et sermo meus, et praedicatio mea non in persuasoriis humanae sapientiae verbis, sed in ostensione spiritus, et potestatis, ut fides vestra non sit in sapientia hominum, sed in potestate Dei. Sapientiam autem loquamur inter perfectos [ICor 2, 1–5, with slight variations]. In alia Epistula eisdem dicit: Signa Apostolatus mei facta sunt super vos in omni patientia, in signis, et prodigiis, et potestatibus [IICor 12, 12]. Sed audiamus eum ad Thessalonicenses scribentem: Scis quod Evangelium nostrum non fuit ad vos tantum in sermone, sed in potestate, et spiritu sancto, et plenitudine multa [IThes 1, 5]." Only in the second of these passages does Paul speak clearly of miracles.

[173] *Ibid.*: "quod pauci sunt, qui miracula videre, paucissimi, qui accipere digni sint."

[174] *Ibid.*, p. 15: "Immergite igitur vos in corporis lutum animae miserae, sic coelestia

such a preparation can miracles really be believed despite false miracles promoted by detestable people.[175] Yet Ficino continues with an interesting argument regarding the true source of every imitation. He creates an analogy between forged coins and the promotion of false miracles, claiming that even such false miracles have some true ones as their source, which encourage people to imitate them and to believe in them.[176] What seems important for Ficino in this example is the result of the miracles: creating faith in believers. The implication is that every miracle is either a true miracle or similar to a true one and that people believe in a false miracle not because it is false (they do not know that) but because it is miraculous (and they know that there are miracles).

At the end of the chapter Ficino himself mentions two miracles which happened in Florence in 1470:

> Indeed, I have heard that some things which are not only marvellous but also believable happened in our time, and even in our city Florence, but [also] some more secret things. Certainly that event was most manifest to the many thousands of people who have seen it and are still alive; we have heard that it happened in Ancona in 1470 from many reliable men. A young woman, because of a most awful contraction of the nerves, used to walk since early childhood on her buttocks instead of her legs. In addition, Bindello, a Florentine, because of a bruise on his throat and chest for many years could not speak at all. They both humbly committed themselves [to the care] of divine Mary in the same place and straightaway emerged healthy; after many years during which they were known by everyone to be ill, now for four years since then they have been continuously known by everyone to be healthy.[177]

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cernetis miracula? O quam stulte optatis, inclinato in terram capite videre sublimia, rapi portentis in altum vultis, non virtutum gradibus scandere. Quid miraculosius, quid divinius in terris, quam animus omnino sui corporis dominus? Imperium hoc experiamur, si possumus, possumus autem, si volumus, tunc non modo cernemus miracula, sed ipsi perficiemus."

[175] *Ibid.*: "Ego certe arbitror, nobis etiam non merentibus, saepe variis in locis mirabilia quaedam signa divinitus fieri, sed non patent omnibus omnia. Multa etiam non scribuntur, vel scripta quidem non creduntur, cuius quidem ambiguitatis occasionem dare videntur nonnulli homines admodum detestabiles, qui imitatione verorum, falsa prodigia introducunt."

[176] *Ibid.*: "Imitatio et verisimilitudo necessario rem veram sequuntur, quam quis imitetur, et repraesentet, non esset introductus nummus adulterinus, nisi quandoque legitimus fuisset nummus, non essent falsa conficta miracula, nisi ex veris miraculis homines ad ipsorum imitationem fidemque invitati fuissent."

[177] *Ibid.*: "Audivi equidem nonnulla nostris seculis, atque etiam in urbe nostra Florentina, mirabilia simul et credibilia contigisse, sed quaedam occultiora. Illud certe multis hominum millibus, qui et viderunt, et adhuc vivunt manifestissimum, quod Anconae anno Domini, M.CCCCLXX. factum a multis fide dignis accepimus. Puella

Here, at last, we have miracles which happened not in the early beginnigs of Christianity, but quite recently. This is another aspect of Ficino's humanist theology, in which a more popular element of religiosity becomes an integral part of the discussion of Christianity. This is not found in scholastic theology, in which we encounter only systematic and technical discussions of the various questions in any debate. What we have in Ficino's treatise is a combination of two distinct traditions of mediaeval religiosity: the speculative discussions of professional theologians, and popular stories of miracles and local saints. A factual description of contemporary miracles in the context of scholastic theology would not have been regarded as appropriate.[178]

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quaedam propter pessimam quandam nervorum contractionem a primis incunabulis gradiendo natibus pro cruribus utebatur. Praeterea Bindellus, Florentinus propter faucium pectorisque contusionem, multos annos loqui nihil potuit, ambo cum divae Mariae eodem in loco se suppliciter commendassent, sani protinus evaserunt, omni populo multis annis noti fuerant infirmi, et postea iam quatuor annos continue omni populo sani."

[178] This, I believe, is part of a wider phenomenon which I call "reality knocks at the window", and which reflects a deep and significant change between mediaeval and Renaissance culture. Since I cannot discuss it here in detail (but I hope to do so in the future), I would say only that this phenomenon represents an increasing use of facts and factual descriptions or examples in the philosophical or theological reasoning of humanists. Here are three more examples of this phenomenon: Ficino, *Theologia platonica*… vol. 1, p. 200: "Vidimus Florentiae Germani opificis tabernaculum, in quo diversorum animalium statuae ad pilam unam connexae atque libratae, pilae ipsius motu simul diversis motibus agebantur: aliae ad dextram currebant, aliae ad sinistram, sursum atque deorsum, aliae sedentes assurgebant, aliae stantes inclinabantur, hae illas coronabant, illae alias vulnerabant. Tubarum quoque et cornuum sonitus et avium cantus audiebantur, aliaque illic simul fiebant et similia succedebant quam plurima, uno tantum unius pilae momento. Sic deus per ipsum esse suum, quod idem re ipsa est ac intellegere atque velle quodve est simplicissimum quoddam omnium centrum, a quo, ut alias diximus, reliqua tamquam lineae deducuntur, facillimo nutu vibrat quicquid inde dependet"; Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *In Astrologiam*, in *Opera omnia* (Basel 1557; reprinted Hildesheim 1969), pp. 518–519: "Vivit adhuc homo mihi notus prodigiosae libidinis et inauditae. Nam ad Venerem nunquam accenditur, nisi vapulet, et tamen scelus id ita cogitat, saevientes ita plagas desiderat, ut increpet verberantem, si cum eo lentius egerit, haud compos plene voti, nisi eruperit sanguis, et innocentis artus hominis nocentissimi violentior scutica deseruerit: Efflagitat ille miser hanc operam summis precibus ab ea semper foemina quam adiuit, praebetque flagellum, pridie sibi ad id officii aceti infusione duratum, et supplex a meretrice verberari postulat, a qua quanto caeditur durius eo ferventius incalescit, et pari passu ad voluptatem doloremque contendit, unus inventus homo, qui corporeas delitias inter cruciatum inveniat. Is cum non alioquin pessimus sit, morbum suum agnoscit et odit, quoniamque mihi familiaris multis retro annis, quid pateretur libere patefecit. A quo diligenter tam insolitae pestis cauasm, cum sciscitarer, a puero inquit sic assuevi. Et me rursus consuetudinis causam interrogante, educatum se cum pueris scelestissimis, inter quos convenisset hac caedendi licentia quasi pretio quodam, mutuum sibi vendere

Ficino is aware of this and, since the scholastic mode of discussion remained dominant at the time, he writes:

> Do not be surprised Lorenzo, that Marsilio Ficino, a student of philosophy, introduces miracles: since the miracles which we described are true and the duty of the philosopher is to confirm individual things by appropriate reasons. But there are reasons appropriate to natural things, those which are according to nature, and reasons appropriate to divine things, which are of the sort which transcend nature, both metaphysical proofs and especially miracles. For God confirms [His] mysteries not only by words but also by miraculous acts. From which comes that saying [of Christ]: if you do not want to believe words, believe acts.[179]

Ficino's account of contemporary miracles stands in contrast to his image (in both Lorenzo's mind and that of other readers) as a Platonic philosopher. Ficino is therefore trying to reconcile the more popular element in his humanist theology with its more speculative and

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flagitiosa alternatione pudorem. Hoc ego factum licet grave auribus liberalibus, ideo non suppressi, ut cognosceremus *evidentia ipsa* [emphasis mine] quantum illis affectibus valeat consuetudo, ne quasi causam habere terrenam nullam possint, coelum statim accusemus. Nam id quidem astrologus si audiat, damnatam dicet fuisse Venerem in hominis genitura, et adversis fortasse, aut alio modo minantibus radiis Martis flagellatam"; *ibid.*, pp. 446–447: "Observavi hyeme ista in suburbana mea villa, in qua haec scripsimus insignem omnem singulis diebus aeris mutationem, ipsis interim ante oculos positis decretis astrologorum, ita salubre mihi ubique faveat coelum, ut in dierum supra centum atque triginta iugi observatione non plus sex aut septem tales vidi dies, quales in eorum libris futuros ante praevideram. Meminit puto adhuc Pandulfus Collennutius meus iuris quidem consultus, sed in omnibus literis ingeniosissime eruditus, quantum nobis Bononiae risum, super ista re dederit quidam mathematicus, qui nos ea die copiosissimos imbres iubebat expectare, quam totam lucidissimus Sol et clarissimam et serenissimam reddidit." See also Charles B. Schmitt, 'Experience and Experiment: A Comparison of Zabarella's View with Galileo's in *De Motu*', in *Studies in Renaissance Philosophy and Science* (London 1981), pp. 80–138. This rediscovery of experience and the facts of experience is not in itself an aspect of humanism in the strict sense of a return to classical antiquity. It is however, a new way of reasoning which some humanists adopted in reaction against the scholastic insistence on the *auctoritas* of books. (Of course, humanists also rely on the authority of books, although the books they employ are largely different from the ones which were authoritative for the scholastics. But relying on facts and observation as evidence is something new) For the time being, I shall call it "the popular aspect of humanist theology".

[179] Ficino, *De Christiana religione…* p. 15: "Noli Laurenti mirari quod Marsilius Ficinus philosophiae studiosus miracula introducat: vera enim sunt quae scribimus, ac Philosophi officium est rationibus propriis singula confirmare. Sunt autem propriae rerum naturalium rationes, quae secundum naturam sunt, divinarum vero quae super naturam huiusmodi sunt, tum metaphysicae probationes, tum vel maxime miracula. Deus enim non tantum verbis quantum miraculosis operibus mysteria sua probat, et praecepta confirmat. unde illud: Si verbis non vultis credere, operibus credite" [a free quotation of Jn 10, 38: "Et si mihi non vultis credere, operibus credere"].

philosophical element, both by presenting this popular element as a legitimate part of philosophical practice and by drawing an analogy between his own combination of these two elements and the dual manner in which God validates his mysteries. Thus the structure of Ficino's humanist theology, which combines philosophical discussions with an emphasis on the supernatural, is a reflection, in human language, of divine practice.

Immediately in the next chapter, Ficino discusses Christ's authority among the Gentiles by citing, among others, Porphyry, who although he was known to be an opponent of Christianity, regarded Christ as pious and wise.[180] Ficino is thus really committed to the two aspects of his humanist theology, which also represent the tension between human wisdom and words on the one hand, and the power of God as manifested in miracles and prophecy on the other. He cites here Paul who, in turn, quotes Isaiah, to show that human wisdom and power is nothing compared to God's wisdom and power.[181] The Christian religion has a *vis divina* which is stronger and wiser than any *vis* or *sapientia humana*. But then he returns to what he has said elsewhere, that the Neoplatonists do not represent mere human wisdom, since they were influenced by Christian theology:

> That divine Plotinus was also afraid of these [weapons of our army]; he was the first of the Platonic interpreters, Numenius, Iamblichus and Amelius, who did not try to refute Christian theology but rather to emulate it.[182]

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[180] *Ibid.*: "Porphyrius in libro de responsis [*Porphyrii Philosophi Fragmenta*, ed. Andrew Smith (Leipzig 1993), 345F (from Eusebius), 345aF (from Augustinus)] inquit, Christum dii maxime pium pronunciaverunt, immortalemque evasisse asserverunt, benignum admodum de illo testificantes. Adiungit Hecatem deam interrogantibus de Christi anima respondisse: Viri pietate praestantissimi est illa anima, hanc colunt a rigiditate alienam, et post multa subiunxit Hecate: Christus ipse pius in coelum sicut pii conscendit. Huic ergo ne derogaveris, concedit ipse Porphyrius, Christum et sapientem, et pium fuisse, quamvis Christianos partim indoctos partim magos nominet, tum veritati, tum sibi ipsi manifeste repugnans."

[181] *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17: "Quibus cum certamine congredi illustres philosophi dignabantur, et a quibus convicti sunt, neque religionem ipsam vi humana fuisse exortam, quae tam mirabiliter humanam sapientiam et potentiam superavit. Quod apud Esaiam Deus praedixit: Perdam sapientiam sapientum, et prudentum prudentiam reprobabo. Et Paulus Apostolus confirmavit dicens: Sapientia huius mundi, stultitia est apud Deum. Quod stultum est Dei, sapientius est hominibus, et quod infirmum est Dei, fortius est hominibus [After I Cor 1, 18–25]."

[182] *Ibid.*, p. 17: "Timuit quoque illa [arma militiae nostrae] divinus ille Plotinus platonicorum princeps interpretum, Numenius Iamblichus et Amelius, qui Christianam Theologiam non reprobare, sed aemulari potius studuerunt."

That Porphyry wrote a famous book against the Christians, is not mentioned here, since he did try to refute Christian truth (although, as we have seen, he also admired Christ Himself). But these other important members of the Neoplatonic tradition made some concessions, out of fear, to Christian theology. Ficino concludes in the next chapter (chapter twelve entitled: *Christi authoritas apud Mahumethenses*) that the Christian law was confirmed as the most excellent of all laws by Gentiles, Jews, and Muslims alike.[183]

But in the next chapter, entitled *De generatione filii Dei in eternitate*—the main points of which have already been discussed in section b above, Ficino returns to the ancient theology:

> Orpheus called this Pallas who was born only from Zeus' head; Plato in [his] epistle to Hermias called this the Son of God the Father; in [his] Epinomis he called [it] *logos*, i.e., reason and word, when he says: *logos* most divine among all things adorned this visible world. Hermes Trismegistus mentions the word and the Son of God, and even the spirit, many times. Zoroaster also attributed intellectual progeny to God. Indeed, they all said what they could, and indeed with God's help. But only God understands this, and [only] someone to whom God would like to reveal it.[184]

These are the only names mentioned in this context. Only through the ancient theology can Ficino demonstrate even to non-Christians the eternity of the ideas regarding the Son of God and the Trinity, since God himself revealed these mysterious truths to those theologians. The reconciliation of the ancient theology and Christian truths is thus the foundation for the eternal history of Christianity. This argument was so influential that it apparently delayed a philological critique of the "ancient" theology by humanists.

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[183] *Ibid.*: "Concludere possumus, Christianam legem apud omnes sectas Gentilium, Iudaeorum, Mahumethensium, re vera omnium excellentissimam esse concedi."

[184] *Ibid.*, p. 18: "Hanc Palladem appellavit Orpheus, solo Iovis capite natam, hunc Dei patris filium Plato in Epistola ad Hermiam nominavit [Epistle VI, 323d2–4], in Epinomide nuncupavit logon, id est, rationem ac verbum dicens: Logos omnium divinissimus mundum hunc visibilem exornavit [*Epinomis*, 986c4–5: "… συναποτελῶν κόσμον ὃν ἔταξεν λόγος ὁ πάντων θειότατος ὁρατόν"]. Mercurius Trismegistus de verbo, et filio Dei, ac etiam de spiritu saepe mentionem facit. Zoroaster quoque intellectualem Deo prolem attribuit. Dixerunt isti quidem, quod potuerunt, et id quidem adiuvante Deo. Deus autem hoc solus intelligit, et cui Deus voluerit revelare." I quote this passage, and some of my discussions of it, again in this context, because of its importance for this discussion as well. I omit the two individual notes which can be found in notes 63 and 64 above.

This, I argue, is a clear response to the spiritual crisis in which Ficino set out the double nature of the history of Christianity:

1. A human and organic aspect, which consisted of a long series of religions and philosophies among the pagans. Even at that stage, what was best and true in *prisca theologia* was directed by God, but here God only helped man to develop his native need for religion. The revelation to Moses and the Hebrew prophets, the Incarnation and Resurrection, and the miracles and prophecies of the Apostles and their followers, represent an interference of the supernatural in history, which accounts for the triumph of Christianity. Then followed a long decline, up to the present Iron Age. This decline which has now reached a crisis, comes from within the Christian community. Scholastic theology, with its Aristotelian philosophical foundation and synthesis which separated Christianity from the ancient wisdom of the ancient theologians, and thus from the potential historical profundity of its eternal history, is one factor in this decline. The other is the fact that Christianity has become a matter of habit and, thus, almost a set of empty ceremonies because of this separation from its eternal past. What makes the crisis even more threatening is the spiritual and political threat of the Turkish Empire, which had become increasingly dramatic since 1453.

2. But Christianity also has a divine and eternal aspect, which is represented by the *generatio filii Dei in aeternitate*. At the Incarnation, the divine and eternal breaks into human history, and the Resurrection as well as the miracles and prophecies of the Apostles are still part of this interference of the divine in human history. This is a guarantee of the eternity of the Christian religion. But by becoming institutionalized, the Christian community ran all the dangers of other human communities. The priest became separated from the ruler; philosophy became a matter of dry reasonings without the profundity of the best ancient philosophy and theology; and people have forgotten the boundaries between the human and the divine.

I have already touched on this issue of the separation between the human and the divine. Perhaps I shall now recall some of the points I have made before. In scholastic theology and philosophy, the opinions of many of the late Fathers, Doctors of the Church, and councils, were sometimes regarded almost as equal in authority to Scripture, the first four Ecumenical Councils, and the Creed. We shall see in the next chapter how Pico explicitly draws a clear boundary between scriptural

truth and human opinion. Ficino does not say this explicitly, but his references to mixing the human with the divine,[185] as well as the absence of most Fathers and all Doctors even when one might excpect them to appear, make this fairly clear. From his more positive descriptions of the religious life of the early Christians, it is clear that this is the type of religious life based on real divine revelation, without the additions and corruptions introduced in later generations. If we make this distinction between the truly divine and the human increments, we have achieved not only the proper separation of the human from the divine, but also the proper means of attaining (conditioned on divine grace) that union with God of which man is capable.

In order to return to Christianity in its purer form, then, one needs a new theology. The scholastics and their philosophy should be abandoned in favour of a theology which is a synthesis of Scripture and the best in classical culture, especially the newly discovered Platonic philosophy. Miracles should again occupy a central place in theology. Those who were considered authorities during the long period of decline should be discarded. On the theoretical level, the line of demarcation between human knowledge and divine mysteries should be drawn with greater emphasis, but in a manner which is different from that of the scholastics. It is exactly this redrawing of the boundaries which would enable the believers to strive properly for divine grace and the beatific vision. On the level of the community, on the other hand, the distinction between religious and secular authority should be set aside. Religion is the essence of human existence and the unifying force in the life of nations and societies. The ancient model of the combination of king, priest, and philosopher in one person should therefore be restored.

This, I believe, was Ficino's solution to the spiritual crisis of his time. This solution included a renovation of Christianity deriving essentially from the past—the divine history of Christian truth and the ancient theologians—an important idea current in Renaissance culture.[186] It is therefore not surprising that when Savonarola became powerful, Ficino was one of his supporters. After all, here it seemed that the ideal of the

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[185] Another example of the same accusation of mixing up divine and human matters, but in different context, is in Ficino's letter to Alessandro Braccesi, in his *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, p. 673: "Qui Homerum Hesiodumque, quod partim tanquam ingrati divina ad homines, partim tanquam impii humana ad Deos transtulerint, ex hominum coetu ad inferos expulerunt." See Allen's discussion of this letter and theme in his *Synoptic Art*… pp. 95–96.

[186] See, e.g., Camporeale, 'Mito di Enea…' pp. 5–18.

priest-king, which Ficino ennounced twenty years earlier in *De Christiana religione* was about to be put into practice.[187]

One final point. *De Christiana religione* has been described as essentially an apologetic work.[188] This may apply to chapters 26–34, in which we have a disputation with the Jews, demonstrating from their own literature the truth of Christianity. This kind of disputation is part of Chris-

[187] Of course, Savonarola does not represent all the various aspects of the new theology. He does represent the supernatural aspect of Christianity which Ficino missed in his Iron Age; but he was not a philosopher, and his humanist education was only partial; the relations between Ficino and Savonarola, as well as Savonarola's role in humanist theology, are discussed in chapter five.

[188] Kristeller, *Il pensiero filosofico*… p. 346: "Per questa sua convinzione il Ficino crede senz'altro nella possibilità di costruire colle sue premesse una teologia cristiana. Egli stesso fa questo tentativo nell'opera apologetica de Christiana religione e nel frammento del commento a S. Paolo, e si dovrebbe perciò una volta dimostrare con un' interpretazione precisa, fino a che punto egli riesca a conciliare la sua dottrina filosofica colla tradizionale teologia cristiana." But for Kristeller there is a dichotomy or tension, which needs a reconciliation, between Ficino's "philosophical doctrine" (which is what interests Kristeller) and a "traditional Christian theology" (what is it exactly?). For him there is no relation between Ficino's humanism (in fact for Kristeller Ficino is a philosopher and not a humanist) and his interest in theology and religion (which is regarded only as a result of social pressure). The fact that Ficino was a priest, and his deep interest in religion in general, and in Christianity, suggest, I argue, the impossibility of a separation between Ficino's humanism or philosophy, on the one hand, and his interest in religion and theology, on the other. In order to understand his philosophy, we have to consider seriously his religious motivations. For me, a humanist is one who studies one of the five humanistic disciplines (grammar, rhetoric, poetry, ethic, and history) with relation to classical tradition. Ficino, then, is a humanist, and his deep interest in religion and theology should be taken into consideration with his interest in Plato, in ancient pagan theology, and in Neoplatonic tradition. This is why I regard the phrase 'humanist theology' as accurate, while for Kristeller it is a controversial phrase. Also Trinkaus regarded this work as apologetic in his *In Our Image*… vol. 2, p. 736; but his discussion on pp. 734–753 is sensitive to Ficino's interest in both philosophy and religion, to the complex relations he describes between the classical pagan philosophy and Christianity as well as between ancient religions and civilizations and Christian religion, and includes comparisons with Manetti's *Contra Iudeos et Gentes* (pp. 736, 743–744) and with Ficino's own exegetical work on Paul's Epistle to the Romans (pp. 744–753). But while justly criticizing Nygren and Dress for not taking into serious historical consideration Ficino's attitude towards Christianity (pp. 751–753), Trinkaus presents, by the end of his discussion, his own reflections on the importance of Ficino's work in contrast to Nygren and Dress: "These remarks are in fact quite irrelevant to my purposes and necessary only because certain scholars seem to have found that the reaching towards greater universality in man's intellectual and religious traditions was a great crime in the Renaissance, and have seen in Marsilio Ficino one of its principal perpetrators" (p. 753). As I tried to show in this chapter there is much more than "reaching towards greater universality in man's intellectual and religious traditions" in Ficino's *De Christiana religione*; in fact what we have here is a response to a deep spiritual crisis and a new

tian tradition from the earliest times: after all, some parts of the Gospels and the Epistles, especially the Epistle to the Hebrews, are intended for a Jewish readership. So, of course, is Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*. But the intended readership should be determined not merely by such elements, but by the nature of the whole work. Augustine's *De civitate Dei* contains many chapters which argue against Jewish interpretations of Scripture; yet nobody would claim that it was directed at Jewish readers. The chapters which I have discussed contain a new theology, based more on pagan sources than on the Jewish Bible, and directed at Christian readers who are faced with a crisis, offering them a way out of it. Ficino himself says that he produced the Italian version in order to make this work accessible to the largest possible readership. The fifteenth century is very different from the first few centuries of Christianity, where many Jews were widely read in Greek, and were open to the preaching of a new religion based on their own. By 1470, most European Jews would regard Christianity as an alien and hostile religion. It is most unlikely that even those Jews who could read Latin and Italian would show an interest in a book like this. In the best case, the chapters against the Jews could be used by preachers who tried to convert Jews. This is in any case part of the tradition of Christian sermons. These chapters may also give Ficino an opportunity to demonstrate some of the new philological methods in a field which was only beginning to be properly explored. But the main theological, historical, and philosophical purpose of the book is to offer Christians a new theology, and from this point of view the chapters against the Jews are only part of the proof of the superiority of Christianity to all other religions.

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humanist theology. These notions are essential for the understanding of Ficino's work and its context and they are missing from Trinkaus' analysis. Trinkaus seems to be also unaware of Ficino's rejection of scholastic theology and its assumptions and methods, as well as to Ficino's critique of the present state of religion. He only claims that "there thus seems to be in Ficino, also, the rejection of the formal, external modes of solving the problems of conscience which, as we saw above, Bruni and Valla rejected in the procedures of the regular clergy" (pp. 749–750). More recently, Miguel Granada in his 'Apologétique platonicienne et apologétique sceptique: Ficin, Savonarola, Jean-François Pic de la Mirandole', in Pierre-François Moreau [ed.], *Le scepticisme au XVI et au XVII siècle—Le retour des philosophies antiques à l'âge classique*, 2 vols. (Paris 2001), vol. 2, pp. 11–47, argued that the notion of ancient theology in Ficino can be seen as a Christian apologetic, a part of rational theology which meant to prepare men towards Christianity (pp. 21–26). But, as I have argued in this chapter, religion for Ficino has such status in humanity and in human civilization that an apologetic point of view is not relevant and it is certainly not at the centre of the discussion in *De Christiana religione*.

I have not discussed in detail chapters XXIII–XXIV which deal with the Sibylline Oracles, or the chapters against the Jews, including chapter XXVII, *testimonia prophetarum de Christo* (pp. 30–46), the longest chapter in the book. These chapters are important as evidence for some of Ficino's methods. We do not find here detailed philological discussions of the sort one finds in Valla's and Poliziano's works. But Ficino does draw on a wide range of authors available in Latin and compares between them. In the chapters on the Sibyls, he draws on information provided by Livy and by Varro in Augustine, and compares prophecies of the Sibyl and Virgil's fourth Eclogue with biblical prophecies for the coming of Christ. In the chapters on the Jews and the Jewish Scriptures he draws on Talmudic and mediaeval Jewish sources made available in Latin before his time in order to show that what the Jews themselves say supports in practice the Christian message. If anyone searches these chapters in depth, the results—both in matters of method and of substance—may have nothing new to offer beyond what we find in the literature of the Middle Ages. From a theological point of view these chapters are clearly not at the centre of this work.

Many of the issues which, in the case of this work of Ficino's, had to be extracted from his text by interpretation, comparison, and combination, will appear in a more explicit manner in the next chapter, on Pico's *Apologia*. This is especially true of the problem of divinely inspired and authoritative texts as against the mere opinions of theologians. What Ficino does in practice, Pico makes explicit in many of his arguments. This may have been caused by the different character of these two works and by the different personality and character of the two authors. *De Christiana religione* is a positive work, directed at the widest possible Christian readership, and offering a new balance, and a new connection, between the human and the divine. Ficino does not have to quote his sources with precision except when he so wishes, and he is under no obligation to explain to the reader what he regards as proper divine authority. It is also part of Ficino's character and temperament to disseminate his views and doctrines in a positive rather than in a disputative manner. Pico's personality is very different. He is not a priest, and being a wealthy aristocrat he is not dependent on any patrons. The argumentative strain is evident in many of his writings and in much of his social behaviour. This is especially relevant to a work of self-defence like the *Apologia*, where Pico has to demonstrate to readers who are experts in theology and law that his opinions are not heretical. In discussions of heresy, the problem of the nature

of proper religious authority becomes central; and a discussion, with names and references of people and works which the author does not accept as divinely authorized is imperative. Many of these issues concerning the boundary between the human and the divine, which are already present in Ficino, but often only by hint and implication, will be explicitly discussed in Pico's work. On the other hand, and precisely because of the centrality of this problem of authority, Pico does not offer in his *Apologia* a completely new system of religion and theology. This is also out of character for Pico. He is not mainly a man who wishes to introduce a new way of thinking to his generation. He would rather deal with individual issues as they come. Nine hundred theses, or even a discussion of one central philosophical problem as we have it in *De ente et uno*, are a far cry from *De Christiana religione*, *Theologia platonica*, and the gigantic project of translation and interpretation of the whole corpus of Plato and Plotinus, and some works of later Platonists.

CHAPTER FOUR

GIOVANNI PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA AND HIS THEOLOGICAL METHOD: BETWEEN *OPINIO* AND *FIDES*

In 1486 Pico returned to Florence from his theological studies in Paris. Here he had a new and original plan: to organize an international council in Rome and to invite to it the best philosophers and theologians, to discuss and dispute nine hundred theological and philosophical theses which he collected from many sources. These theses included much material which was new to Western Europe, taken from Neoplatonic sources such as Plotinus and Proclus, and from the Jewish Kabbalah. Pico published his theses in Rome in 1486. He was then suspected of heresy by some theologians, who persuaded the pope to appoint a commission, composed of theologians and experts on Roman and Canon Law, to examine these theses. Of the nine hundred theses, the commission found thirteen heretical or of dubious orthodoxy. Pico's *Apologia*, which he published in 1487 was his answer to the condemnation of these thirteen theses.

In this chapter I intend to deal with Pico's humanist theology in the context of the theological crisis of his time, as expressed mainly in his *Apologia*. I shall focus both on Pico's critical reaction to his condemned theses and on his solution to the crisis. The discussion will be divided into three phases. The first will deal with the general background to the theological crisis. The second will be an analysis of Pico's *Apologia*—his response to and attack on the papal commission and on the contemporary scholastic theology, including his solution to the problem of *fides* and *opinio*. The third will explore the philosophical background to some of the essential terms in the *Apologia*. I shall try to demonstrate here that Pico uses terms and ideas which are associated with the ancient skeptical tradition and are derived from Cicero's *Academica* and Augustine's *Contra Academicos*.[1]

[1] Pico's place in the skeptical tradition (both Academic and Pyrrhonian) of the fifteenth century still needs to be explored through a detailed study of all his works in regard to ancient skeptical terms, arguments, and modes of thought, as well as

If there is still a necessity in the context of his humanist theology to show Pico's connection to humanism, this chapter will show Pico's Academic and skeptical debt to Cicero and Augustine, and his use of this philosophical-rhetorical tradition in his counter-attack on the scholastic theologians and on the papal commission.[2] Pico's *Apologia* is an embodiment both of his humanist side, i.e., the use of ancient sources, and of the theological side, i.e., his deep acquaintance with both patristic (Greek and Latin) and scholastic theology.

Pico's unique place among this remarkable group of individuals called 'humanists' has been known to modern scholars at least since the works of Garin.[3] Pico is often represented in the secondary literature

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comparisons with his fellow-humanists (especially Ficino and Poliziano), and taking into consideration the Florentine intellectual context of the late fifteenth century as a whole. This is beyond the scope of this chapter, which offers a limited presentation of the way in which Pico used ancient Academic skeptical terms in his argumentation against the papal commission and the scholastic theology of his time, thus exploring a theological crisis and constituting a humanist theology. For Pico's use of Sextus Empiricus in his composition against astrology see Gian Mario Cao, 'The Prehistory of Modern Scepticism: Sextus Empiricus in Fifteenth-Century Italy', in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* LXIV (2001), pp. 229–279; especially 259–260; for a more general discussion on Sextus' transmission see Luciano Floridi, *Sextus Empiricus—The Transmission and Recovery of Pyrrhonism* (Oxford 2002); for Pico's use of skeptical notions in his philosophical ideas and writings, but from a completely different point of view, see De Pace, *Le scepsi…*; especially pp. 111–159. It seems that for De Pace there is Pico *scepticus*, which replaces the Pico *platonicus*, *aristotelicus*, or *averroeticus*, already discussed in modern scholarship. In this chapter I shall offer a different point of view on this issue. See also the remarks of Garin in the next note. For the use of skeptical arguments in theology in another context see John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism…* pp. 169–188.

[2] See the citations from Garin regarding the relations between Pico and the humanist movement, and between scholastic and humanist culture, in his 'Le interpretazioni del pensiero di Giovanni Pico', in *L'Opera e il pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola…* vol. 1, pp. 3–33, cited in the introduction, n. 32.

[3] Eugenio Garin, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola…*; *La cultura filosofica…* pp. 231–279. A good bibliographical account on Pico can be found in Fernand Roulier, *Jean Pic de la Mirandole (1463–1494), Humaniste, Philosophe, et Théologien* (Genève 1989), pp. 9–36. A critical discussion on the historiography on Pico is in William G. Craven, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola…* Garin was justly regarded by Brian P. Copenhaver (in his 'Number, Shape, and Meaning in Pico's Christian Cabala: The Upright Tsade, the Closed Men, and the Gaping Jaws of Azazel', in Anthony Grafton and Nancy Siraisi [eds.], *Natural Particulars: Nature and the Disciplines in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge, Mass. 1999), pp. 25–76, on p. 27) as "the starting point for any serious treatment of this important thinker." See also Copenhaver's critical discussion on some historiographical attitudes towards Pico, especially in regard to nature, magic, and Cabala, before and after Garin, on pp. 25–30. See also Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and His Sources', in *L'Opera e il pensiero…* vol. 1, pp. 35–133. For a recent study on Pico see Louis

as the humanist who had the best scholastic education or training, and both his famous enthusiasm for these thinkers and their style, as well as his formal education, which included, among others, studies in the Universities of Padua, Bologna, and Paris, are established facts. On the other hand Pico's most important composition, in which he fully expressed his competence in scholastic philosophy and theology, i.e, the *Apologia*, so it seems, has been less frequently discussed in comparison to any other of his works. In other words, our view of the relation between Pico and the scholastics should be based first of all upon a detailed analysis of the *Apologia* and its background and sources—but there is as yet no such analysis. At the centre of this chapter, then, I shall introduce an analysis of the main themes and aims of the *Apologia*, and a detailed analysis of a number of theses, in order to put this work in the context of the theological crisis of the age.

I have already discussed some of the differences between Ficino's *De Christiana religione* and Pico's *Apologia*. Let me now put Pico's book in the wider context of this study. This is a work of technical theology. Although Pico is not a professional theologian like Caroli, his *Apologia* is far more technical than Caroli's *Liber dierum lucensium*. This can be explained by the differences in background and literary form. Caroli is writing a dialogue concerning one aspect of the crisis, the institutional aspect. He is concerned with the problem of institutional authority and with an institutional reform of his monastery and order. In Pico's work it is the problem of authority in matters of faith which stands at the centre of the discussion. Caroli need not justify his religious positions, since his book does not deal technically with questions of faith and heresy. Pico deals especially with such questions, and his work is an answer to people who are well trained in dogmatic theology. This, together with Pico's recent scholastic studies in Paris, would explain the frequent and detailed discussions of scholastic texts and opinions in his work. But this should not mislead us. Pico's book is not yet another work of scholastic theology. Indeed, his aim is to question the very basis of scholastic theology and the assumption made by some contemporary theologians that some of the major figures in scholastic theology should be regarded as sources of authority in matters of faith comparable to Scripture and the Creed. In a way, one could suggest that what Caroli

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Valcke, *Pic de la Mirandole—un itinéraire philosophique* (Paris 2005); see, on pp. 451–465, a recent bibliography. I shall refer to other relevant discussions of Pico below.

wishes to see happening in the Church from the institutional point of view is not unlike what Pico wishes to accomplish on the dogmatic and philosophical side.

A comparison between Ficino's and Pico's books has already been drawn at the end of the last chapter. I shall only emphasize again that on the issue of authority in matters of philosophy and theology their positions are not all that different. What Ficino does by the selection of the sources he quotes and mentions and the omission of references to scholastic and to most patristic sources, Pico does explicitly by his critical discussions of the opinions of various Doctors and Fathers and by his general rejection of the authoritative status of such opinions. Both Ficino and Pico represent the evolution of a new humanist theology, which rejects most of the mediaeval tradition, returns to Scripture and early Christianity, and introduces materials from newly discovered texts, especially of Plato and the Neoplatonists. This introduction of materials which were new to the Latin West, including even Hebrew and Arabic sources, into Christian theology is done by Pico in his nine hundred theses. The importance of his *Apologia* to our discussion is twofold. First, he discusses openly and in detail the status of most of the mediaeval tradition, which Ficino has silently rejected. Second, he employs in his examination of theological opinions concepts and techniques taken from the skeptical Academy.

It may be significant, and representative of the new spirit, that the most technical theological work discussed in this study was written by someone who was not a friar and a professional theologian like Caroli, or an ordained priest like Ficino. Pico was a layman, and yet it was he who officially demanded a reformulation of Catholic theology.

1. *The Theological Crisis*

What bothered Pico most about scholastic theology was the continuous ambiguity and obscurity of two terms: *fides* and *opinio*. In other words, the lack of a clear and consistent distinction between three elements:

1. The Creed, which includes the articles of faith, the statements concerning the mysterious events of faith, in biblical terms, derived from the first four Ecumenical Councils of the Church, which cannot be an object of human speculations and cannot be doubted without the suspicion of heresy.

2. The "dogmatic formulations", which are the "official" explanations of the Church's Ecumenical Councils, in contemporary terms, of the mysterious events of faith. As such, the "dogmatic formulations" are historical, theological-philosophical, and linguistic products, which can be submitted to human scrutiny without offending against their content, the "object of faith".[4]
3. The different opinions of the Church Fathers and Doctors.

This distinction, I argue, is the key to an understanding of the humanist theology that Pico developed. I shall start by presenting a general description of this difficulty and then move on to a detailed discussion.

At the very heart of Christianity there is *fides*, faith, which derives from revelation and which is by its very nature a mystery and thus beyond the capacity of the human mind. Around this core theology developed—in different "historical moments": patristic, scholastic, and humanist theology—as a science whose main object was God. It was always understood that theology originated only from the human mind, although it was based on Holy Scripture. In theology, different opinions were discussed concerning God and the interpretation of Holy Scripture. But all these opinions were considered human speculations only, and thus could be right or wrong, *probabiles* or *veri similes*, but not *necessariae*. In this construction, a constant tension exists between the one and only faith and the many speculative opinions. This tension is expressed by the concept of heresy, defined differently at different historical moments. In patristic theology the heretic was a man who did not accept the "dogmatic formulation" or "dogma" of a mystery or object of faith. But in scholastic theology a doctrine of right opinions was developed and considered suitable for the hegemonic scholasticism of the period. The heretic was now a man who opposed this doctrine of right opinions.[5] This scholastic ideology of the "right doctrine",

[4] See Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla*… (1972), p. 246: "Il primo aspetto è dato dal reperire ambiguità ed equivoci all'intero stesso della terminologia teologica, sia che si trattasse delle rispettive versioni greca e latina delle espressioni verbali, sia che fosse presa in esame la stessa operazione-passaggio da una lingua all'altra, cioè della 'traduzione' in quanto tale. Il Valla era in grado di poter dimonstrare tutto ciò scegliendo—e la scelta non era casuale ma storicamente determinata dall'avvento di una possibile unione tra Greci e Latini—un luogo classico in cui le formulazioni dommatiche venivano a mostrare chiaramente la loro relatività storica dal punto di vista linguistico-semantico in rapporto ad un determinato contesto culturale filosofico."

[5] See, for instance, in one of the papal commission's conclusions against Pico's opinion in Léon Dorez and Louis Thuasne, *Pic de la Mirandole en France (1485–1488)* (Paris 1897), p. 136: "Ista conclusio est scandalosa et contra communem opinionem

which identified itself with the necessary revealed truth, was criticized by humanist theology, which used historical and philological methods. Lorenzo Valla is the first humanist one should mention in this context. But Valla's method had very little influence on most humanists before Erasmus.[6] The doctrine of right opinions was identified mainly with Thomas Aquinas, whose followers connected faith and opinions in a very particular way, which emphasized the role of the intellect in the act of faith.[7] John Duns Scotus' critique, however, sharply separated

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sanctorum doctorum, nec opinio glosatorum in hoc tenetur." It seems that such reasons were considered sufficient for the condemnation of Pico's opinion. Most relevant here is the new letter which was only recently published in Alison Brown, 'New light on the Papal Condemnation of Pico's Theses: Antonio Alabanti's letter to Niccolò Michelozzi in January 1487', in *Rinascimento* XLVI (2006) [but published in 2008], pp. 357–372. This document shows that the condemnation process started earlier than we thought, and that it was connected with the famous condemnation of Jean Laillier. For the notion of heresy between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries, and the tensions between heterodoxy and orthodoxy, see Gordon Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages—The Relation of Heterodoxy to Dissent c. 1250 – c. 1450* (Manchester 1967); see, e.g., the opening sentences on p. 1: "Heresy is defined by reference to orthodoxy. It does not exist alone. A doctrine or a sect or an individual becomes heretical when condemned as such by the church. For this, there has to be a body of accepted beliefs to violate and a recognized authority to enforce it. In their absence, to profess even the most outrageous opinions is to operate in a doctrinal—as opposed to a moral or a legal—vacuum; the community may be scandalized; the law may be broken; but there will be no officially constituted outlook against which they offend." For a more recent discussion of the notion and history of popular heresy in the Middle Ages see M.D. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy—Popular Movements from Bogomil to Hus* (London 1977). For a discussion of academic heresy see, e.g., J.M.M.H. Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy at the University of Paris, 1200–1400* (Philadelphia 1998); Luca Bianchi, *Censure et liberté intellectuelle à l'université de Paris (XIII–XIV siècles)* (Paris 1999). See also the article by William J. Courtenay discussed in the excursus, n. 202 and context.

[6] Yet Pico does use philological methods here and there: see below n. 81.

[7] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 4, a. 2: "Et ideo oportet quod tam in voluntate sit aliquis habitus quam in intellectu, si debeat actus fidei esse perfectus: sicut etiam ad hoc quod actus concupiscibilis sit perfectus, oportet quod sit habitus prudentiae in ratione et habitus temperantiae in concupiscibili. Credere autem est immediate actus intellectus: quia obiectum huius actus est verum, quod proprie pertinet ad intellectum. Et ideo necesse est quod fides, quae est proprium principium huius actus, sit in intellectu sicut in subiecto." Regarding the rising status of Thomas' doctrine see M. Michèle Mulchahey, 'The Dominican *Studium* System…' p. 312: "An intellectual bent was also enforced in Dominican *studia generalia* by law early in the fourteenth century, or at least the order attempted to do so. As of 1315 the masters of students in all Dominican *studia*, but especially those in the general houses of study, were told to observe whether lectors and others taught and disputed in accordance with the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas. Offenders who did not heed the correction of the master of students were to be reported to the provincial prior or even to the master general if he could be reached. The personnel of every Dominican *studium generale* thus included

opinions from faith and tended to put faith (originating in revelation) far beyond the boundaries of opinion (arising in the human mind) by emphasizing the role of will (*voluntas*) in the act of faith.[8] Pico's move is therefore to be placed somewhere between the Thomists and the Scotists—the two main schools of scholastic theology in this period.[9]

The humanist theology of Pico can be understood as an endeavour to establish a new relationship between *opinio* and *fides*, in response to both the Thomists and the Scotists. As I mentioned above, this relationship was founded on a new method of theology and drew on texts and notions which were almost completely unknown to scholastic theologians.

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a Thomist watchdog, as it were." For a late fifteenth-century scholastic theologian in Florence who represented this view about the importance of the intellect see Vincenzo Bandello da Castelnuovo, *Opusculum Fratris Vincentii de Castronovo Ordinis Praedicatorum ad magnificum ac generosum virum Laurentium Medicem quod beatitudo hominis in actu intellectus et non voluntatis essentialiter consistit incipit*, written in 1474–1475; the text was edited by Kristeller in his *Le thomisme et la pensée italienne*… pp. 187–278. See also chapter three, n. 4.

[8] On Scotus see Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford 1999), especially pp. 84–89. Pico, as will be clear from the end of this chapter, settles for *voluntas* rather than *intellectus* or *ratio* in what concerns heresy, and even quotes Thomas Aquinas in support of his view. As is well known, the will came into its own as a cause of action independent of the intellect and lust in early Christianity. Even the frequency of *voluntas* (θέλημα) in the New Testement points this way. Augustine dedicated a whole work, *De libero arbitrio*, to the importance of the will in human actions. For a late fifteenth-century Florentine scholastic theologian who represented this view see P. Zvonimir Cornelius Šojat, *De voluntate hominis eiusque praeeminentia et dominatione in anima secundum Georgium Dragisic (c. 1448–1520), studium historico-doctrinale et editio Tractatus: 'Fridericus, De animae regni principe'* (Roma 1972). For some of the developments in the Scotist school during the fourteenth century regarding the notion of the will, with further references, see Guido Alliney, 'La ricezione della teoria scotiana della volontà nell'ambiente teologico parigino (1307–1316)', in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 16 (2005), pp. 339–404. For an interesting case study of explaining Thomas' view on the vision of God via Scotus see M.W.F. Stone, 'Making Sense of Thomas Aquinas in the Sixteenth Century: Domingo de Soto on the Natural Desire to See God', in Gerd Van Riel and Caroline Macé [eds.], *Platonic Ideas and Concept Formation in Ancient and Medieval Thought* (Leuven 2004), pp. 211–232.

[9] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Apologia*, in *Opera omnia*… pp. 117–118: "Quod et ipsi meam philosophandi rationem eos considerarint, inviti etiam fateantur, plane necesse est, qui enim se cuipiam ex philosophorum familiis addixerunt, Thomae videlicet aut Scoto (qui nunc plurimum in manibus) faventes, possunt illi quidem vel in paucarum quaestionum discussione, suae doctrinae periculum facere, at ego ita me institui, ut in nullius verba iuratus, me per omnes philosophiae magistros funderem, omnes schedas excuterem, omnes familias, agnoscerem. quare cum nihil de illis omnibus esset dicendum, ne si privati dogmatis defensor, reliqua post habuissem, illi viderer obstrictus." See also n. 35 below.

2. Quia errare in opinione Thomae, non est errare in fide— *The Dispute in Rome 1486, and the* Apologia

In a letter dated October 15, 1486, Pico wrote to his friend Andrea Corneo:

> I intend to depart to Rome in about a day and there I will stay for the winter unless an unexpected event or new fate intervening drags me elsewhere. Thence perhaps you will hear what your Pico has accomplished in the field of learning, or what on earth (for I shall speak although somewhat arrogantly) what, as I say, since you offer him on coming there [to Rome] a wealth of learned men, how he requires the aid of others in literary matters. In Rome, and wherever in the world I shall have been, those distinguished men will have whom to command there, and whom as Plautus said, they would turn like a movable millstone at their will.[10]

Pico is about to leave for Rome, where he intends to stay for the winter. It is not just another visit to Rome; he plans to make significant progress in the contemplative life, *in vita umbratili et sellularia contemplando*. The adjective *umbratilis*, shady, meaning contemplative, is connected to schools; the adjective *sellularia* is connected to a chair (*sellula*), and hence to studies.[11] He is expecting to achieve great fame in this territory of schools and studies and among the men of the schools: the professional theologians. But the unexpected did happen at Rome and its dramatic consequences were traumatic for Pico.

In 1487 he was accused of heresy, on account of his nine hundred theses. In the denunciation of him, of August 4, 1487, we find:

> The above-mentioned professors of theology and experts of both the Roman and Canon Law, after a long and detailed discussion and a careful and valuable examination—sometimes in the presence of the abovementioned prince and sometimes in his absence, an examination which was held many times also in our presence—of the aforementioned conclusions and their content, notified us unanimously that many of those

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 378: "Romam prope diem proficiscar inibi hyematurus, nisi vel repens casus, vel nova intercidens fortuna, alio me traxerit. Inde fortasse audies quid tuus Picus in vita umbratili et sellularia contemplando profecerit, aut quid tandem (dicam enim quanquam arrogantius) quid inquam, quando tu illi isthuc accedenti doctorum copiam polliceris, aliorum operae indiget in re literaria. Romae, et ubi terrarum fuero, habebunt principes isti cui imperent, quem velut trusatilem, ut inquit Plautus, molam pro arbitrio versent." The words *trusatilis mola* does not seem to appear in Plautus, but rather in Cato, *De re rustica* 10, 4; Aulus Gellius 3, 3, 14. See Lewis and Short, p. 1905.

[11] On this issue see William J. Courtenay, *Teaching Careers at the University of Paris in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Notre Dame, Indiana 1988); especially pp. 13–14.

> conclusions—both those according to the opinion of the same prince and those according to the opinion of others—are heretical or smack of heresy; others are scandalous and offend the feelings of the believers; many of the conclusions restore the errors of the pagan philosophers that long ago were abolished and have become obsolete; and others favor the faithlessness of the Jews, and there are also many conclusions which, by using the disguise of natural philosophy, try to dignify certain disciplines which are hostile to the Catholic faith and mankind; these propositions are most severely condemned by the authority both of their canons and of the doctrines of the Catholic teachers.[12]

These words of Pope Innocent VIII, from the "Denunciation of the Theses of Iohannes Pico Count of Concordia with a prohibition on printing and reading them, punishable by excommunication",[13] clearly express the tension between opinions and faith. The opinions which

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[12] Garin [ed.], *De hominis dignitate, heptaplus*… pp. 64–65: "… Theologiae professores ac utriusque iuris Doctores praefati, post diutinam et diligentem discussionem et saepius tum praesente tum absente dicto Comite reiteratum nonnunquam etiam in nostra praesentia accuratum et laudabile examen dictarum conclusionum et contentorum in eis, nobis concorditer rettulerunt nonnullas ex conclusionibus praedictis, tam secundum propriam eiusdem Comitis quam aliorum opinionem, haereticas aut haeresim sapientes, aliquas scandalosas piarumque aurium offensivas, plerasque etiam renovantes errores gentilium philosophorum iamdudum abolitos et obsoletos ac alias perfidias Iudaeorum foventes, nec non complures quae sub quodam fuco philosophiae naturalis honestare nituntur artes quasdam Fidei Catholicae et humano generi inimicas, a suis canonibus et doctrinis Catholicorum Doctorum acerrime damnatas propositiones." A good account of Pico's Roman affair was given by Giovanni Di Napoli, *Giovanni Pico*… pp. 81–137. See especially pp. 118–119: on December 6, 1486, Pico first published his theses and he was on his way to Rome. On February 20, 1487, the pope announced that he had appoinnted a commission to check Pico's theses (but see the reference to Alison Brown's article in n. 5). On March 13, 1487, the papal commission denounced, without a full agreement between its members, thirteen theses. This denunciation was on different levels of gravity but three of them were considered heretical. On May 31, 1487, Pico published his *Apologia*. On June 6, 1487, the pope announced that Pico, neglecting the decision of the commission, had added new writings; he stated that an inquisition process would begin, but we do not have any details regarding such process. On July 31, 1487, Pico swore to accept the future decision of the pope regarding his theses. On August 4, 1487, the pope denounced the theses and prohibited to publish, to read, to hear, and to destribute them, punishable by excommunication. For Pico's nine hundred theses see Bohdan Kieszkowski [ed.], *Conclusiones sive theses DCCCC Romae anno 1486 publice disputandae, sed non admissae* (Genève 1973); Albano Biondi [ed. and trans.], *Conclusiones nongentae: le novecento tesi dell'anno 1486* (Firenze 1995); S.A. Farmer [ed. and trans.], *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486)* (Tempe, Ariz. 1998). But see the critical remarks of Farmer's edition by Luc Deitz, '*De omni re scibili—et de quibusdam aliis*. A New Attempt at Understanding Pico's "900 Theses" ', in *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch* 7 (2005), pp. 295–301. With regard to Pico's *Apologia*, there is as yet no critical edition and no commentary or translation of this text.

[13] Garin [ed.], *De hominis dignitate, heptaplus*… p. 63: "Damnatio propositionum Ioan-

Pico wanted to put to the test of the Catholic faith, in the form of nine hundred theses or conclusions—some of his own devising and some taken from others—in a public debate in Rome in 1486, stirred the Holy See to convene theologians to discuss and determine the orthodoxy of these opinions. Their decision states that the opinions are denounced according to the rules or canons of the Catholic faith and the doctrines of the Catholic teachers. This is exactly the point Pico went on to attack in his *Apologia* (1487)—his detailed reply to the denunciation of thirteen of the theses, and I shall return to it later.

Another section of the same document may clarify the problem:

> And since it would be a long and laborious task to introduce one by one in front of those who are present here all these conclusions and propositions which were condemned by those [theologians and law experts], and the reasons for their condemnation, therefore by the determination of our reverend brothers the cardinals of the sacred Roman Church, we condemn and reject by the apostolic authority held by those who are present here this book of nine hundred conclusions mentioned before, although the book contains some Catholic and true conclusions—we still condemn it—because of the admixture it contains of the above mentioned conclusions worthy of condemnation.[14]

There were also, it transpires, some true Catholic opinions in the denounced book. The admixture made things difficult for the professional theologians. Most of them did not read Greek and could not follow the arguments and ideas in a book whose author—despite his young age (24) and although he was not a professional theologian—showed exceptional familiarity not only with the Latin Church Fathers and scholastic theology, but also with the Greek Church Fathers and with Greek philosophy from Plato and Aristotle up to the Neoplatonist tradition (e.g. Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus, Dionysius the Areopagite). Pico also mentioned ideas from Arabic philosophers, from the Chaldean Oracles (*Oracula Chaldaica*) and from the Jewish Kab-

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nis Pici Comitis Concordiae cum inhibitione illas imprimendi ac legendi, sub poena excommunicationis."

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 65: "… et quoniam prolixum et operosum esset in specie et singillatim praesentibus inserere omnes illas conclusiones et propositiones per eos magistraliter damnatas cum causis damnationis earum, idcirco de consilio venerabilium Fratrum nostrorum S.R.E. Cardinalium libellum noningentarum Conclusionum praedictarum, quamvis aliquas contineat catholicas et veras, propter admixtionem tamen praedictarum damnabilium assertionum, auctoritate apostolica praesentium tenore damnamus et reprobamus."

balah, quoted in the original Hebrew, which he analysed and interpreted. Clearly, examining these nine hundred conclusions would be a long and exhausting task.

I am more concerned, however, with the question: what was Pico's purpose? What was at the bottom of the nine hundred theses? In my view, he was putting forward a deliberate critique of scholastic theology. This critique was aimed at confronting the Church and demanding a decision on a vast range of opinions, in order to produce a historical-critical perspective, which emphasized that these opinions had arisen in different cultural contexts, rather than deriving directly from faith. This is a deliberately extreme position, taken in order to create a problem for scholastic theology. The multiplicity of differing and often contradictory opinions was also a criticism: these were all opinions which needed to be sorted out. Above all, the relationship between opinion and faith had to be reexamined.

Pico started his critique of the scholastic theology by demanding a public dispute on his nine hundred theses. This huge number of theses was intended to serve as a warning: there are so many opinions, and we have to decide which of them are in harmony with revealed truth. Pico emphasized the need for a critical historic perspective in order to examine different opinions from different cultural contexts.

Pico offered the concept of *concordia* as the criterion for judging opinions in this examination. We reach this *concordia*, which constitutes a new relationship between *opinio* and *fides*, by means of a systematic discussion and critical analysis of all human knowledge using the best human instruments: reason, experience, and the authority of other authors, historical and philological analysis of the different sources and contexts. To all these methods Pico adds philosophical-dialectical discussion, in which the human or natural truth is understood as *concordia*. The first task of the philosopher or philosophy, of the theologian or theology, is to reach a state of harmony between different opinions, a state of logical and psychological *concordia*, still on the level of human and probable opinions. In contrast, the second task and the final aim of this examination is the achievement of a higher type of *concordia*. At the final stage, this should be a *concordia* between *opiniones* which have stood the philosophical test, on the one hand, and scriptural *fides*, on the other. Thus there are two levels of *concordia*:

1. The level of faith, which is the realm of the *necessarium*-ἀναγκαῖον, and the infallible truth derived from Holy Scripture and revelation. Here the idea of *concordia* between theological opinions which have been found more probable on the first level and the revealed truths of faith is used as the criterion for *probabilis veritas* on a higher level.
2. The level of opinion, which is the realm of the *probabile*-πιθανόν, or *veri simile*-εἰκός, or *possibile*-δυνατόν. Here we find the different opinions of the Fathers and Doctors submitted to philological, philosophical, and historical scrutiny, still on the level of human opinion.

Pico used the idea of *concordia* as the most significant and indeed sole connection between human and revealed truth. On the one hand we have the philosophical and theological realm, in which there are many different and contradictory opinions, of both scholastics and Church Fathers. Here we attain *concordia* through probable truth, the object of which is true cognition based on reason (*ratio*). In the final analysis, another *concordia* will appear between the theological and the philosophical opinions which have passed the first test of probability and the infallible truth of Scripture and revelation. At both levels the humanist theologian uses similar procedures of analysing texts and contexts. At the same time, a humanist theologian like Pico realizes that once we have understood the revealed texts we are no longer in the realm of probability. The higher probability attained at the level of the second *concordia* is the result of what appears to be an agreement between opinions found to be probable on the human level and divine truth. This makes such opinions *probabiliores*, but it still does not lend them the status of absolute truth which is reserved to revelation alone.

Thomas used the principle of analogy in order to find areas of compatibility between Aristotle and Christian doctrines, but always saw them as separate realms which could not be completely combined (since revealed truths were beyond the realm of Aristotelian philosophy, and thus: *secundum quid idem, simpliciter diversum*). Valla used the principle of philological and historical analysis of the Holy Scriptures as a new method of doing theology. Pico can be characterized as a humanist theologian who used the principle of *concordia* as *probabilis veritas* based on historical and philosophical analysis of texts and contexts of mediaeval scholastic theologians. If the main object of Valla's investigation

was the Scriptures, for Pico the main object was theological opinions. The principle of *concordia*, achieved in two stages of the examination of theological and philosophical opinions—this was Pico's original contribution to the theological crisis of his age: the crisis of ultimate authority in matters of faith.[15]

In the *Apologia*[16] Pico systematically attacked *isti magistri*, the theologians who were appointed by the pope to examine his nine hundred theses, condemning thirteen of them,[17] and rejecting his explanations given before the papal commission.

Thus, the text is divided into thirteen chapters, with a short introductory section at the beginning,[18] including many parallel passages to the *Oratio*,[19] and a conclusion, where Pico summarized his theses.[20]

Accused of using philosophy to grasp what was beyond human nature, of the desire to enhance his reputation by means of a public dispute in Rome of all places, of youthful arrogance—the arrogance of introducing such a huge number of theses—of being a magician, an

[15] On Thomas' solution to the problem of the relation between philosophy and theology in the context of Valla's critique of contemporary Thomism see Camporeale, 'Lorenzo Valla tra medioevo…' pp. 63–90; see especially pp. 79–87. See also Bruno Pinchard, *Metaphysique et semantique (la signification analogique des termes dans les principes metaphysiques) suivi de Thomas de Vio-Cajetan L'Analogie des noms (texte Latin et traduction annotee)* (Paris 1987). For a detailed discussion of "probabilism" and its origins in late scholasticism, in the Aristotelian tradition and in the context of moral thought, with further references, see M.W.F. Stone, 'The Origins of Probabilism…'

[16] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Opera omnia*… pp. 114–240.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 62: *De descensu Christi ad inferos; De poena peccati mortalis; De Adoratione crucis et imaginum; An suppositari a Deo possit natura irrationalis; De Magia naturali et Cabala Hebraeorum; De Eucharistiae sacramento; De Salute Origenis; Non esse in libera potestate hominis, credere; De accidentibus in Sacramento; De verbis consecrationis; De miraculis Christi; An Deus intelligat; De abdita animae intelligentia.*

Six of these theses were condemned (on Christ's descent into hell, on the punishment of a mortal sin, on the adoration of the cross, whether irrational nature could be attributed to God, on magic and Kabbalah of the Jews, on the sacrament of Eucharist) and seven were declared suspect (on Origen's salvation, on belief not being in man's hand, on accidents in the sacrament of the Eucharist, on the words of consecration, on Christ's miracles, on whether God has understanding, on the soul's secret understanding).

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 114–125.

[19] *Ibid.*, e.g., pp. 115–124.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 237–240. But here the thirteen theses were replaced by forty-six corrected theses.

unbeliever, a new heresiarch,[21] a Jew, and a Muslim,[22] it seems that the only accusation which really bothered Pico was that of heresy:

> I write to others who believe or suspect that I am or I was at any time a heretic: although, in fact, my chief purpose is this, to show that not I but rather those who have falsely accused me as heretic have turned from the orthodox and Catholic way.[23]

This constituted a serious attack on the members of the papal commission,[24] who were distinguished theologians chosen by Innocent VIII.[25]

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[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 114–115: "… summussores isti, in me damnarent: aliqui enim philosophiam et literas omnino capere, illud etiam (ut viderentur scioli), quandoque addentes, eiectum Adam de Paradiso, quod per scientiam boni et mali aequalem se diis facere voluit. Exterminandos pari exemplo, de Christi curia, qui volunt sapere plus quam oportet. Alii non tam philosophiam, quam hoc ipsum disputandi genus, et hanc de literis publice disceptandi institutionem, non approbare, ad pompam potius ingenii et doctrinae ostentationem, quam ad comparandam eruditionem esse illam, oblatrantes. Nonnulli me audacem dicere et temerarium. Qui hac aetate quartum, scilicet et vigesimum nondum natus annum, de altissimis philosophiae locis, de sublimibus Christianae theologiae mysteriis, de incognitis disciplinis, in celebratissima urbe, in amplissimo doctissimorum hominum consessu, disputationem proponere non dubitarem. Multi non tam quod Romae, quod iuvenis, quam quod de tot numero, id est, de nongentis disputaturus essem quaestionibus, accusare, et superfluo, et ambitiose, et supra vires id factum calumniantes. Ex his autem qui sapientiam, id est Theologiae studium profitebantur, quidam fuere, qui conviciis forte levioribus non contenti, non iam audacem me, non temerarium, non gloriosum, sed magum, sed impium, sed novum in Christi ecclesia haeresiarcham praedicarent."

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 116: "Non magus, non Iudaeus sum, non Ismaelita, non haereticus, sed Iesum colo, et Iesu crucem in corpore meo porto, per quem mihi mundus crucifixus est, et ego mundo."

[23] *Ibid.*: "Aliis scribo qui esse me, aut fuisse aliquando haereticum credunt, vel suspicantur: quamquam autem principale propositum est hoc, ut ostendamus ab orthodoxo et catholico tramite non me, sed illos deviare, qui me haereticum calumniantur…"

[24] There are three more passages in this short introduction where Pico attacks these theologians by calling them barking dogs and stammerers: "quod sunt plures, sicut canes ignotos semper adlatrant, ita et ipsi saepe damnant oderuntque quae non intelligunt" (122); "Et tamen oblatranant canes mei, minutula quaedam et laevia, ad numeri ostentationem me accumulasse, quasi non omnes, quae ambiguae maximae controversiaeque sunt quaestiones, in quibus principales digladiantur" (124); "Sed iam [ad] ipsas examinandas quaestiones descendamus, quas magistri isti, quasi haereticas damnarunt, quod facturo, mutanda est loquendi ratio, est enim mihi cum barbaris sermo, et (ut lepide est in proverbio) balbi non nisi balbos intelligunt" (125).

[25] See in Dorez and Thuasne, *Pic de la Mirandole…* p. 120: "Reverendos in Christo patres dominos Ardicinum Aleriensem, Petrum Usselensem, Anthonium Tiburtinum, Golzeranum Leglinensem, Johannem Coclensem Dei gracia episcopos; necnon venerabiles et circumspectos viros dominos Sansonem de Senis, Ordinis Minorum, Anthonium de Bononia, Ordinis Servorum generales; Joachimum de Ven[e]ciis, vicarium generalem Ordinis Predicatorum, Mercum de Miraldo, magistrum sacri Palacii, Anthonium Flores, utriusque juris doctorem, sanctissimi Domini nostri Pape referendarium,

This raises two questions: what is the orthodox and Catholic way, and who should be considered a heretic? Such fundamental questions indicate a deep crisis in which the foundations of the Christian faith are no longer agreed on.[26] The critical analysis of Di Napoli regarding

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Lucam de Fulgineo, sanctissimi Domini nostri confessorem, Franciscum de Murcia, ejusdem sanctissimi Domini nostri cubicularium, Johannem Cordier, Parisiensem, Baptistam Signorium de Janua, procuratorem Ordinis Heremitarum Sancti Augustini, et Cristophorum de Castronovo, Ordinis Minorum, sacre theologie professores et magistros…" Di Napoli criticizes the text published by Dorez and Thuasne and claims that they were not always accurate in their reading of the names in the manuscript (Di Napoli, *Giovanni Pico*…. n. 38, p. 127). Thus, among the members of the commission there were six bishops, two heads of religious orders, and eight experts in theology and law: the bishop Giovanni Monissart was the head of the commission. The other bishops were Ardicino della Porta, Pietro Garsia (who was the main opponent of Pico in the commission), Antonio Grassi, Galcerando De Andrea, and Giovanni Edmondo Courcey. The two heads of orders were Francesco Sansone or Samson di Siena, head of the Franciscans, and Antonio Alabanti di Bologna, head of the Servites. The experts were Gioacchino da Vinci—the head of the Dominicans, Marco de Miroldo—a Dominican and Master of SS. Palazzi, Antonio Flores—Doctor in law, Luca Borsiani da Foligno—confessor of the pope, Francesco da Murcia—master of the court of the pope, Giovanni Cordier—professor of theology in the Sorbonne (who supported Pico in the commission), Battista Signori de Genova—procurator of the Augustinians, and Cristoforo da Castronuovo—professor of theology (*ibid*., p. 91, and notes 39–53, pp. 127–128).

[26] There are many examples of disagreements and tensions among the members of the papal commission that investigated Pico and among other theologians in Rome at that time on these issues. Such examples indicate that this affair is not Pico's personal crisis but rather a more general authority crisis in contemporary theology. See, for instance, Paolo Cortesi's humanist-rhetorical defense of Pico against the contemporary conservative theologians in his *Liber sententiarum* (1504) and *De cardinalatu* (1510) discussed in John F. D'Amico, 'Paolo Cortesi's Rehabilitation of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola', in *Bibliothèque d' Humanisme et Renaissance* XLIV (1982), pp. 37–51; *Renaissance Humanism* … pp. 163–165. Thus, I argue, both Pico and his opponents represent the true tenor of the age which is the theological crisis. See e. g., Dorez and Thuasne, *Pic de la Mirandole*… pp. 103–104: "Outre la vigilance doctrinale d'un pape de sentiment aussi peu élevé que l'était Innocent VIII, elles montrent, entre autres choses, qu'une guerre sans merci était déclarée entre les théologiens romains et la Sorbonne, d'une part, entre les théologiens romains et parisiens et l'humanisme, d'autre part"; *ibid*., p. 126: "… ipsi inter se deliberarunt, disputaverunt et disceptaverunt"; *ibid*., p. 130: "… post disceptationem super ea factam"; *ibid*., p. 129: "Dicta die ejusdem mensis marcii, congregati ad invicem, omnes domini deputati prefati preter dominum Marcum de Miroldo, magistrum sacri Palacii, qui in omnibus et singulis infrascriptis, occasione egritudinis supervenientis (ut dicebatur) in eum, minime interfuit aut unus de predictis dominis deputatis fuerit…" See also Di Napoli, *Giovanni Pico*… p. 92: "Il 1 marzo 1487 il presidente Monissart convoca per il giorno seguente la Commissione e Pico a fine di procedere, secondo il mandato del pontefice, al 'chiarimento' delle tesi discutibili; alla prima riunione di venerdì 2 marzo mancano quattro dei sei vescovi; sono presenti solo il Monissart e il Garsia, oltre agli altri commissari; il che è già indice di fratture,

Pedro Garcia's *Determinationes magistrales* of 1489—his response to Pico's *Apologia*—clearly reveals the fact that there is a serious theological crisis in which there is a confusion between a theological opinion and the truth of faith.[27] While introducing his theological method in which he pointed out eight grades of *assertio catholica*, Garcia identified the truth of faith with a theological thesis that was deduced (*infertur*) from an article of faith; here, Di Napoli argues, Garcia made a serious error in theology.[28] Thus, Di Napoli concludes that the problem was theologians like Garcia who used this deduction and shouted "heresy!" everywhere.[29] This is a good indication of the theological crisis. Di Napoli moves from accusing only Garcia or Pico's personality to the notion of a theological crisis, without using the expression; he understands that something is wrong with the theologians around Innocent VIII, since a

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nella Commissione, le quali rispecchiano le fratture esistenti negli ambienti romani ed europei; fuori della Commissione Bonfrancesco Arlotti, vescovo de Reggio Emilia e il card. Giorgio da Costa, vescovo di Lisboa, sono favorevoli a Pico; fra i theologi di Roma o residenti in Roma sono a lui favorevoli Giovanni de Myrle e perfino il Cordier, che è membro della Commissione; ma i sostenitori di Pico aumentano sempre più e non sempre per motivi strettamente dottrinali"; *ibid.*, p. 94: "Il 13 marzo la Commissione termina i propri lavori e redige il verbale conclusivo, formato dai commissari: dei 16 membri, che la costituiscono, solo la metà dei commissari appone la propria firma; mancano i nomi dei quattro vescovi assenti alla prima seduta, quello del generale dei Serviti Alabanti, dei due domenicani Marco de Miroldo e Gioacchino da Vinci, di Giovanni Cordier"; Henri de Lubac, *Pic de la Mirandole* (Paris 1974), p. 50: "Malgré l'opposition du 'parisien' Jean Cordier, professeur de Sorbonne, qui refuse de signer le procès-verbal, et en l'absence d'un autre commissaire, Marco de Miroldo, maître du sacré Palais, qui depuis le 6 mars s'est fait porter malade, les sept premières propositions sont notées avec rigueur, les six autres de façon plus bénigne."

[27] Di Napoli, *Giovanni Pico*… pp. 175–187. For Garcia's text see Pedro Garcia, *Determinationes magistrales contra conclusiones apologeticas Joannis Pici* (Roma 1489). See also Kieszkowski [ed.], *Conclusiones*… pp. 97–108.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 176: "'Secundus gradus est earum [veritatum] quae ex contentis in sacro canone [Scripturae] *bona et necessaria consequentia* inferuntur'. Qui il Garsia è evidentemente fuori strada; una tesi che venisse ottenuta per inferenza da una verità di fede, attraverso una premessa che non fosse di fede, non potrebbe assolutamente venir qualificata come verità di fede; sarà al massimo una *conclusio theologica*, la cui opposta non è quindi tesi eretica; si noti che il Garsia non dice che la tesi venga esplicitata come contenuta implicitamente nella verità di fede, giacché una dottrina esplicitata è contenuta formalmente nelle fonti della rivelazione; egli parla espressamente di dottrina che viene *inferita*, e l'inferire non è esplicitare"; *ibid.*, p. 179: "… sicché, essendo per il Garsia verità di fede una tesi inferita da un articolo di fede, e cioè una conclusione teologica, la sua opposta è detta eretica; il che è theologicamente molto grave."

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 185: "… ma di teologi come il Garsia erano piene le facoltà del suo tempo in cui si usava e si abusava dell'inferenza per gridare ad ogni passo all'eresia."

young layman like Pico is more accurate in matters theological than a bishop.[30] But Di Napoli is interested only in proving Pico's good faith and doctrine, his orthodoxy and the fact that he was not a heretic.[31] By doing so he neglects Pico's inventiveness, which was derived from his humanist background.[32] Pico certainly does not neglect all scholastic theological traditions on the one hand, but he is also not just another scholastic theologian on the other. But let us return to the *Apologia*. Pico hints at his motives for using a public dispute: like gymnastics which strengthens the body, so the literary dispute strengthens the soul.[33] Then he clarifies his attitude to intellectual argument, in which the loser receives a favour from the winner—in other words, learns from him

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 186: "La scelta di Innocenzo VIII cadde proprio su di un teologo come il Garsia; con tale scelta il papa voleva forse che a rispondere a Pico fosse proprio colui che era stato il principale oppositore del Conte, per cui ben possiamo dire che la stampa della sua opera mostra nel Garsia il più ostile dei commissari e l'organizzatore della battaglia antipichiana; e ciò con tutta la sua protesta di non aver agito e di non agire per invidia. Lorenzo de' Medici non era un teologo, ma col suo intuito capiva bene che i teologi vicini al papa non dovessero essere degli studiosi seri. Purtroppo la Roma del tempo di Innocenzo VIII non offriva teologi migliori, e non era la teologia a brillare in quella Sapienza che gli umanisti illustravano con la loro retorica e la loro filologia. Tuttavia solo fino ad un certo punto si può parlare di immaturità teologica per quei tempi; altri teologi non sarebbero stati tanto facili a parlare di eresia; la decadenza della teologia era grave; tanto grave, che diversi secoli prima la metodologia teologica era ben più sicura di quella che si può constatare nelle *Determinationes magistrales* del Garsia; il ventiquattrenne e laico Giovanni Pico era più preciso e più equilibrato, in sede di metodologia teologica, del vescovo Garsia; per lui la 'regula fidei', a fine di determinare una proposizione come verità di fede, è data dalla determinazione della Chiesa sulla base delle fonti della rivelazione che sono la Scrittura e la Tradizione, mai dalla inferenza…"

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 186–187: "Pico ebbe a soffrire dalla lotta che ne fece una vittima; varie e molteplici ne furono le circostanze, ma vi concorse pure il suo temperamento. La sua buona fede e la sua integrità dottrinale, in sede di teologia cristiana, erano fuori discussione; lo erano di meno il suo ardore e il suo ardire; ma non lo erano affatto i tempi."

[32] Even though he admits that in the traditional theological disputations the participants, unlike Pico, ignore Plato and the Platonists, it does not seem an important point for him. See *ibid.*, pp. 83–84: "… tutte le dispute degli Studi e degli Ordini religiosi ignoravano Platone; e Pico era consapevolmente orgoglioso di essere il primo a portare Platone e i platonici in una pubblica disputa." Di Napoli does not give any evidence to prove his argument except a citation from Pico himself, in note 10, p. 124: "'… Platonicorum… doctrina… a me nunc primum, quod sciam,—verbo absit invidia—post multa saecula sub disputandi examen est in publicum allata.'"

[33] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 116: "Sicut enim per gymnasticam, corporis vires firmiores fiunt, ita in hac quasi literaria palaestra, animi vires et fortiores longe et vegetiores evadunt."

about his own mistakes—rather than being hurt.[34] In ancient terms, we could say that Pico was interested in dialectic rather than eristic. He stated that he would not swear to anyone's words and that he had learned from all teachers and all schools of thought.[35] I consider this statement to be important, since his alleged philosophical path from Aristotelian scholasticism to Platonism seemed clear to his contemporaries.[36] Pico cannot commit himself to any opinion here because he intends to examine the status of opinion in itself, and to work towards a concord between probable opinions and infallible faith.

I think that Pico is committed to this examination, since through it he wishes to solve the problem of the relationship between opinion and faith. But the very use of the technique of examining opinions to reach probability, and some of the terms he uses in this process, clearly indicate a growing influence of the skeptical Academy.

I shall now give an example of the way in which Pico examines the various opinions which had been expressed concerning a disputed theological point. The first chapter includes Pico's discussion of Christ's descent into hell. This theological theme has a long history, starting in the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus written in the third century, developed in Alexandria in the same era, especially (as far as we know) by the Church Fathers Clement and Origen, and later included in the Apostles' Creed.[37] The theological issue is very complex and raises many questions, such as why did Christ descend into hell, before whom

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[34] *Ibid.*, p. 117: "Quare, et quod tam grande humeris onus imposuerim, non fuit propterea, quod mihi conscius nostrae infirmitatis non essem, sed quod sciebam hoc genus pugnis, id est literariis, esse peculiare, quod in eis lucrum est vinci. quo fit ut imbecillissimus quisque non detractare modo, sed appetere ultro eas, iure possit et debeat: quandoquidem qui succumbit, beneficium a victore accipit, non iniuriam."

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 118: "… at ego ita me institui, ut in nullius verba iuratus, me per omnes philosophiae magistros funderem, omnes schedas excuterem, omnes familias agnoscerem." Pico is quoting from Horace *Epist.* I.I. 13–15:

> "Ac ne forte roges, quo me duce, quo Lare tuter:
> *Nullius addictus iurare in verba magistri*,
> Quo me cumque rapit tempestas, deferor hospes."

See also in his letter to Lorenzo de' Medici of July 1484 in *Opera omnia*… p. 349: "Sed inspiceremus quidnam subesset, quae sedes, quod firmamentum, quis fundus verbis."—Pico wants to check everything.

[36] Pico was considered a poet, orator and philosopher—Aristotelian in the past and Platonic in the present—by Ermolao Barbaro; see Pico, *Opera omnia*… p. 394: "Video te Poetam egregium, Oratorem eminentissimum. Animadverto te Philosophum, prius Aristotelicum, nunc Platonicum esse factum."

[37] This history is discussed by Ralph V. Turner in his '*Descendit Ad Infernos*: Medieval

did he preach, and, most important, which souls did he release. But Pico's condemned conclusion is of a more technical nature:

> Christ did not descend into hell truly and with respect to his real presence, as Thomas and the common way posit, but only with respect to effect.[38]

Pico is aware that this opinion is contrary to Thomas and common theological thinking. He states right at the beginning that he intends to show that his opinion is not only Catholic, and believed and approved by many Catholic Doctors, but also that it is by far *probabilior*—more probable or convincing—than the opposite opinion.[39] He then sets out the other points in his discussion: that this opinion is not heretical, that those who claim that he cannot defend this opinion from the charge of heresy are making a mistake in a matter of faith, and that the denunciation of this opinion was made unadvisedly.[40] The last two points imply again an attack on the papal commission. Pico claims that the article of faith does not specify that Christians must believe explicitly and in particular that Christ descended into hell in a definite way, but only that he descended into hell.[41]

Here Pico is beginning to present his distinction between what should be regarded as revealed truth and what can be a matter for theological discussion. He continues:

Views on Christ's Descent into Hell and the Salvation of the Ancient Just', in *Journal of the History of Ideas* XXVII (1966), pp. 173–194.

[38] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 125: "Christus, non veraciter et quantum ad realem praesentiam, descendit ad inferos: ut ponit Thomas [*Summa theologiae* III, 52, 1–8, quoted by Verde, *Lo Studio*… IV, p. 1351] et communis via, sed solum, quo ad effectum." It is important to note in this context that Thomas was the common Doctor (*doctor communis*).

[39] *Ibid.*: "Primo volo declarare sensum meum, et quae sit mens et opinio mea, de modo descensus Christi, quam fuit meae intentionis explicare, in proposita conclusione, et ostendere illam non solum esse Catholicam, et a multis Catholicis doctoribus creditam, et approbatam, sed etiam sua opposita longe probabiliorem."

[40] *Ibid.*: "secondo declarabo, quomodo etiam ipsa propositio, de virtute sermonis, et secundum vim verborum a doctis viris nullo modo est haeretica, vel haeresim sapiens, simpliciter iudicanda. tertio declarabo, quod ipsi errant in fide, si persistunt in hac sententia, quod ego non possim conclusionem meam, etiam in sensu quem permittit vis verborum, ad haeresi defendere. quarto et ultimo, ex superabundanti ostendam, quod nullo modo possunt se excusare, quod inconsulte non fuerit facta damnatio eorum."

[41] *Ibid.*: "… volo haec praemittere, quod licet teneamur explicite, et in particulari credere Christum descendisse ad inferos, tanquam articulum fidei a Philippo nobis traditum et promulgatum, sic quod etiam protestatio mea, aut ei similis non salvaret illum, qui poneret oppositum istius articuli, non videtur tamen, quod determinatum modum illius descensus, teneatur quilibet fidelis explicite et in particulari credere."

> But it seems enough for the Christian to believe that Christ descended into hell, not with respect to his body nor with respect to his body and soul, but with respect to his soul only, and to believe that this descent took place with respect to the soul in a possible, suitable, expedient, and fitting way. The reason for this is because the exact way in which his descent took place is not expressly [written], nor does it seem to be demonstrable from the Scriptures or from any determination of the universal Church, or in any particular revelation of God, or in a reliable report of the Apostles. And indeed, what is more, Scotus, who is well versed in the Scriptures, says that it does not appear in the Scriptures that Christ would descend into hell, as Francis de Mayronis relates in his Commentary on the fourth book of the *Sententiae*. How much less can we say that we have from the Scriptures a certain and determined manner of Christ's descent? Thus, there has as yet never been a Doctor whose condemnation of this article I have read to whom it seemed probable (*probabile*), and defensible with the truth of the article, that Christ's soul had not been in hell by way of presence (*praesentialiter*).[42]

It is enough for the Christian to believe that Christ descended only in respect to his soul and that the way (*modus*) he descended was *possibilis, decens, expediens et opportunus*—possible, suitable, expedient, and fitting. Pico claims that the way of descending is not demonstrated expressly in the Scriptures, in any conclusion of the universal Church, in any particular revelation of God, or in a reliable report of the Apostles. Pico quotes Scotus via Francis of Mayronis[43] to strengthen his words. Thus, the way in which Christ descended is a matter for speculation,

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[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 125–126: "Sed sufficere videtur homini Christiano, quod credat Christum descendisse ad inferos, non secundum corpus, nec secundum corpus et animam, sed secundum animam tantum, et hunc descensum secundum animam, credat fuisse modo possibili, decenti, expedienti et opportuno: et hoc quia determinatus modus illius descensus non habetur expresse, nec videtur convinci ex scriptura sacra, nec ex aliqua determinatione universalis Ecclesiae, aut speciali Dei revelatione, vel apostolorum fideli relatione, imo quod plus est, Scotus in sacris literis non parum exercitatus, dicit, quod ex scriptura sacra non habetur, quod Christus descenderit ad inferos, ut refert Franciscus de Mayronis, in quarto sententiarum: quanto minus dicere possumus, quod ex scriptura habeatur certus et determinatus modus descensus Christi? Unde et non fuit aliquis doctor, cuius ego etiam in hoc articulo damnationem, nunquam legi, cui visum est probabile, et cum veritate articuli defensabile, quod anima Christi non fuerit praesentialiter in inferno." Note again the use of *probabile*. The expression *determinatio* ***universalis*** *Ecclesiae* seems to refer only to the first four Ecumenical Councils and to the Creed, as will be clear from passages of Pico cited below, e.g., in notes. 133, 136, 138 and context.

[43] Franciscus de Mayronis, *In Sententias* (Venezia 1520), p. 217: "dictum est quod christus descendit ad inferos: et de hoc est articulus fidei creditus: quem Philippus descripsit. Dicit tum Scotus quod in scriptura non invenitur." But de Mayronis' intention was in fact to refute Scotus by quoting four pieces of evidence from the Scriptures: "Inducun-

demanding no necessity of belief, an object for debate because of these four criteria. As such, it cannot be an object for condemnation. In spite of this, says Pico, not even one of the theologians in the papal commission thought that it was at least probable and defensible with regard to the truth of the article to say that Christ's soul did not descend into hell *praesentialiter*.

But what then is heresy? Beyond these four criteria, which signify the level of necessity and revealed truth, is everything possible? How can we decide which opinion is heretical?

> But I wanted to say these things for the fuller examination of this matter, just so that we may regard Augustine's saying in his book on heresies as justified, that nothing is more difficult than to define whether this or that thing is heretical. Whence also because of this Augustine himself says that it happened that when two authors both most distinguished, Epiphanius and Philastrius, had written on heresies, in the counting of these heresies they disagree much, for no other reason than that what seemed to one of them heretical, was not considered heretical by the other.[44]

There is nothing more difficult than to define what is heretical and what is not. Pico is paraphrasing Augustine's example of two excellent authors, Epiphanius and Philastrius, who could not agree on this matter, so that what seemed heretical to one was not heretical to the other.[45] Pico is introducing a serious problem: how can believers know which opinion is dangerous to them? If two theologians *multum discordant* on this matter, how can we expect to define what is heretical? In this example something else is implied: what constitutes a heretical opinion can differ between different authors and between different eras and generations. In other words, I would say, history begins to play a role in theology. But this is no help to believers in the present. They

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tur autem quatuor auctoritates…" Pico used his source out of context and in a manner contrary to its intention.

[44] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 126: "… sed volui haec dixisse ad pleniorem huius materiae examinationem, ut et illud Augustini dictum, in libro de Haeresibus verificari videamus, Nihil esse difficilius, quam definire, hoc est haereticum aut non haereticum. unde et propter hoc dicit ipse, contigisse quod cum duo scriptores ambo celeberrimi, Epiphanius et Philastrius de Haeresibus scripsissent, in numerandis illis multum discordant, non ob aliam causam, quam propterea, quod illud quod uni videbatur haereticum, alteri non videbatur."

[45] Augustinus, *De haeresibus*, *praefatio* 7: "Quid ergo faciat haereticum regulari quadam definitione comprehendi, sicut ego existimo, aut omnino non potest aut difficillime potest"; *ibid.*, LVII, 39–40: "Nunc ergo addo quas Filaster posuit [haeresim], nec posuit Epiphanius."

need some criterion to help them recognize heretical opinions. Most believers rely on the specialists, i.e., professional theologians. The problem emerges when specialists *multum discordant*. The historical example adduced by Augustine and his authority, on the one hand, and the disagreement in the present concerning these theological conclusions, on the other, are indications that, as far as Pico is concerned, something is not working. In spite of the fact that he himself was not a professional theologian, he gives an accurate account of the theological opinions of professional theologians, both Fathers and Doctors, in his counterattack on the theologians who condemned his theses. Pico promises first to introduce briefly the sense of his conclusion, then to explain and prove it more extensively.[46] In the following discussion I shall try to show that Pico does not really intend to prove his opinion, nor to refute other opinions, but only to show its probability by means of a detailed and critical discussion and long explanations, drawing on the authority of distinguished Christian Doctors. In fact, Pico's use of the words "explain" (*explicare*) and "prove" (*probare*) is quite different from the common scholastic use, i.e., closer to persuasion than to demonstration,[47] and it is not surprising that he rarely employs such words.

After a short summary of his conclusion, where he points out that because only Christ's soul descended into hell, and souls are separated from any substance, and are therefore not 'compatible' with space, it seems that he did not descend there by means of local movement, but only 'through his operation'; that is without his physical presence in hell, his soul was present there and produced the effects.[48] Pico

[46] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 126: "Sed iam venio ad manifestandam opinionem meam, de modo descensus Christi et ad perfecte declarandum conclusionem meam, primo summatim ponens intellectum eius, secundo illum latius explicans et probans."

[47] See for example Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 6, 3 *ad secundum*; I, q. 8, a. 1, 4; I, q. 2, a. 2, 3 *ad secundum*: "… cum demonstratum causa per effectum, necesse est uti effectu loco definitionis causae, ad probandum causam esse"; "Quia ad probandum aliquid esse, necesse est pro medio quid significet nome"; I, q. 14, a. 12, 2: "Sed infinitum non potest transiri nec a finito, nec ab infinito ut probatur in VI Physic."; I, q. 14, a. 13, 2: "… ex principiis autem necessariis non sequitur conclusio nisi necessario, ut in I Poster. probatur." Such uses of *probare* in the sense of 'demonstrate' can be found hundreds of times in Thomas Aquinas and in other scholastic authors.

[48] Pico, *Apologia*… pp. 126–127: "Quia Christus secundum animam tantum descendit ad inferos, et animae sicut cuicumque substantiae separatae, videtur non competere locari, vel moveri localiter, nisi ratione operationis. ideo dico, quod descendisse ad infernum, vel fuisse in inferno localiter, videtur non competisse Christo, nisi ratione operationis: ita, quod licet vere praesentialiter fuerit anima Christi inferno, substantia tamen sua, non fuit ei ratio praesentialitatis, sed solum sua operatio."

gives two explanations for this opinion. Those who accept the first explanation are relying to a great extent on the arguments of Gregory of Nyssa;[49] on the assumption that only Christ's soul descended into hell, they identify presence with operation in the realm of incorporeal substances like angels or separated souls.[50] They conclude that Christ's soul, separated from his body according to its substance, was neither inside nor outside of hell, but was truly nowhere. But it was said that Christ's soul was in hell because it operated in hell, and that it was most in that part of hell in which it operated most.[51]

Moving from the first explanation to the second, Pico comments:

> But although many Doctors hold this opinion on the way of being in presence in a place, I still do not hold it and I did not follow it in my conclusion, but I hold that opinion which I subjoin immediately. There is therefore another opinion…[52]

With these words Pico begins the presentation of the second explanation of his opinion, the explanation of Scotus and the Scotists, which he prefers. But what is important to notice here is that although we might expect some explanation of the reasons why he does not hold the first view and a critical argument or a refutation, Pico only says: *ego tamen non teneo, nec sequutus sum eam in conclusione mea.* That is all. What is important to him is that many Doctors of the Church accept this explanation. He is very far from proving his own view.

The second explanation is that although a corporeal substance may be commensurately in a place, the reason for (or 'manner of') its being in a place in such cases is not its substantiality, but rather its quantity, which is external and foreign to the nature of its substance. Thus,

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[49] *Ibid.*, p. 127: "Et isti multum innituntur verbis Gregorii Nizeni…" It is most likely that Pico is referring here to quotations from Gregory of Nyssa used by his accusers.

[50] *Ibid.*: "quod substantia angeli vel animae separatae, nunquam potest dici praesens potius huic loco vel illi, nisi praesens negative, id est indistans. sed si quando dicitur, alicubi esse vel fuisse, idem est, si diceretur, alicubi operari vel operatam fuisse, adduntque, quod iste modus loquendi, transsumptus est a rebus corporalibus, quas, quia nos videmus non posse agere, nisi ubi sunt praesentes, saltem secundum communem opinionem, ideo etiam idem credentes, de incorporeis, concludimus, quod ubi operantur, et ubi invenitur esse operatio eorum, ibi etiam sit eorum substantia localiter praesens."

[51] *Ibid.*: "Dicent ergo sic opinantes, quod anima Christi separata a corpore, secundum suam substantiam, nec fuit in inferno nec extra infernum, sed vere nullibi fuit. Dicitur autem fuisse in inferno quia operata est in inferno, et in illa parte inferni principalius dicitur fuisse, ubi principalius est operata."

[52] *Ibid.*: "Istam autem opinionem de modo essendi praesentialiter in loco, licet etiam multi doctores teneant, ego tamen non teneo, nec sequutus sum eam in conclusione mea, sed eam tenui, quam immediate subiungam. Est ergo alia opinio…"

although an incorporeal substance may be truly in a place definitively and present locally, the reason for is being in a place is not its substance, but rather its operation, which passes from it to the outside.[53]

Of this explanation Pico says only: "Ista autem opinio, quam ego sum secutus, in conclusione…"[54]

At every stage of the discussion Pico emphasizes that he merely wants to show that his opinion is not heretical but rather probable and possible—indeed, even more probable than the opposite opinion—and that this opinion was approved by many Doctors of the Church.[55]

It is important to see that Pico does not use technical and logical terms, so common in scholastic theology and rhetoric, and used in thematic sermons, nor does he try to prove his own opinion and refute the opposite opinions of others. He frequently uses scholastic terms and assumptions in the discussion of his theses, but not in his rhetoric against the papal commission. We hardly find here typical words such as *probare* (in the sense of 'approve', not the scholastic 'prove'), *explicare, disputare, disserere, docere*, and *demonstrare*,[56] or the phrase *necesse est dicere*, for instance, so common in Thomas' *Summa theologiae.*

A careful reading of the *Apologia* reveals two levels: on the one hand, a detailed analysis, employing many technical terms, and, on the other, the rhetorical responses to the papal commission, including

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[53] *Ibid.*, p. 128: "Quod sicut licet substantia corporea sit commensurative, in loco tamen ratio ei essendi taliter in loco, non est sua substantialitas, sed quantitas quae est extrinseca et extranea a ratione suae substantiae: ita etiam, licet substantia incorporea vere sit definitive in loco et praesens localiter, tamen ratio ei essendi in loco, non est sua substantia, sed operatio eius, ab ea transiens ad extra."

[54] *Ibid.*

[55] *Ibid.*: "Quam opinionem ego iudico sic intelligendam, et sic intellectam iudico, non solum non haereticam, sed etiam probabiliorem sua opposita"; "alia ab habitudine praesentialitatis loci, et hoc intelligendo de facto non negando, alium modum possibilem descensus vel locationis animae separatae ut dico in sequenti conclusione, qui tamen modus est nobis ignotus"; p. 129: "Et quid plures enumero? tenuerunt credo istam opinionem, plus quam centum doctores Catholici et probatissimi, quorum libri non solum non reprobari ab ecclesia, sed celebres in omnibus Christianorum gymnasiis publice leguntur. quos si quis voluerit adire, videre poterit fundamenta opinionis, et cognoscere probabilitatem eius, quod ego non intendo hic facere, qui solum hoc ago, ut sic propositas a me conclusiones declarem, ut inde nec simplices habere possint unde scandalizentur, nec detractores si qui sunt, quod calumnientur."

[56] In John O'Malley's analysis presented in his *Praise and Blame…* pp. 71, 109, these words are descibed as characteristic of the scholastic thematic sermon. In O'Malley's terms Pico should be regarded as part of a new Renaissance theology, which used a new kind of rhetoric, but not the same kind (epideictic oration) and not employing the same terms nor with the same purposes as the preachers at Rome. See also the discussion in my introduction regarding O'Malley's model.

Pico's explicit account of his aims. In the following discussion I shall try to show that both the detailed analysis and the rhetorical responses are relevant to an understanding of Pico's thinking in the context of the theological crisis and his new humanist theology. As we have already seen, Pico uses typical words in his responses such as *probabilis, probabilitas, possibilis, defensabile, decens, expediens*, and *opportunus*.

Pico is not interested in determining which opinion is truer. It is enough for him to show that many excellent Catholic Doctors believed in his opinion:

> But which of the two opinions on the way of being in a place of separated substances would be truer, i.e., that of the Scotists, or rather the opinion of those which I follow, I do not determine. I am only saying that my opinion was both creditable and held as most true by so many Catholic teachers and Doctors most celebrated both in learning and in sanctity; that those who dare to decide between opinions of such approved Doctors which opinion is heretical or smacks of heresy should by far be considered more rash than me, who prefer the authority of those ancient theologians to the conclusions of recent theologians.[57]

Pico almost gives the impression that he himself does not support either side in the dispute. He simply sets so many excellent Doctors, who hold the same opinion which he holds, before the papal commission. But Pico is not only unwilling to determine which opinion is truer; he is also unwilling for his opinions to be criticized on the basis of other opinions, such as the Parisian articles.[58] This is because of an old problem: theologians *multum discordant*:

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[57] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 128: "Utra autem opinio sit verior, de modo essendi in loco substantiarum separatarum, Scotistarum scilicet, an eorum quos sum sequutus, ego non determino, hoc tantum dico, a tot tantisque magistris doctoribusque Catholicis, et doctrina et sanctitate celebratissimis creditam esse opinionem meam, et habitam pro verissima: ut longe magis temerarii iudicandi sint, si qui sunt, qui opinionum doctorum tam probatorum, pro haeretica aut haeresim sapiente audent iudicare, quam ego, qui authoritatem veterum illorum theologorum iuniorum determinationibus anteponam."

[58] These are the 219 propositions condemned by the bishop of Paris Stefan Tempier in March 7, 1277. See Di Napoli, *Giovanni Pico*… p. 150, and notes 45–49, p. 191. For more details on this condemnation, the *via antiqua, via moderna, via communis theologorum*, and related terms, see Valcke, *Pic de la Mirandole*… pp. 48–54, 133–138. For the condemned propositions see David Piché with Claude Lafleur [eds.], *La condamnation parisienne de 1277—Nouvelle édition du texte latin, traduction, introduction et commentaire* (Paris 1999).

> The solemn Doctor Godfrey of Fontaines likewise says that these articles require extensive correction because some of them are false, some contradict one another.[59]

And indeed, Pico is trying to prove that article 218 supports his position no less than does article 204 oppose it. It is clear, then, that they also contradict each other.[60] He uses the verb *probare*, but only in the technical discussion concerning the Parisian articles. His second conclusion in this discussion is important:

> Secondly, as is certain, and those Parisians [Doctors] themselves admitted, these articles do not oblige all believers nor are we obligated to believe in them, except to the extent that they rely on the Holy Scripture or on the decisions of the universal Church. Whence the English are accustomed to say that these articles do not cross the sea; therefore we can also say—if it is allowed to joke about such a serious issue—that these articles do not cross the Alps.[61]

These articles do not oblige all believers, says Pico, and we do not have to believe in them, unless they rely on the Scriptures, or on the decisions of the universal Church. We have already encountered these

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[59] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 129: "Item dicit solennis doctor Gotfredus de Fontibus, quod isti articuli indigent magna correctione, quia nonnulli sunt falsi, nonnulli ad invicem sibi contradicunt…" Gotfredus de Fontibus is Godefrey of Fontaines, who died c. 1306 and left a work, *XV Quodlibeta* and some *Quaestiones*.

[60] *Ibid*., p. 130: "quod sic probo… quod non minus facit pro positione nostra articulus 218, quam faciat contra eum articulus 204." For articles 218 and 204 see Piché and Lafleur [eds.], *La condamnation parisienne*… p. 144: "218. Quod intelligentia, angelus, vel anima separata nusquam est"; p. 140: "204. Quod substantie separate sunt alicubi per operationem; et quod non possunt moveri ab extremo in extremum, nec in medium, nisi quia possunt velle operari aut in medio, aut in extremis.—Error, si intelligatur sine operatione substantiam non esse in loco, nec transire de loco ad locum."

[61] *Ibid*.: "secundo, quod certum est, et ipsi etiam Parisienses hoc fatentur, quod illi articuli non obligant omnes fideles, nec tenemur illis credere, nisi inquantum scripturae sacrae innituntur, aut determinationibus universalis Ecclesiae. unde solent dicere Anglici, Quod illi articuli non transeunt mare: quare et nos si in re tam gravi licet iocari, possumus dicere, Quod non transeunt alpes." This joke regarding the Parisian articles became already a commonplace in contemporary discussions. See, for instance, in Giorgio Benigno Salviati's *De natura angelica* (1499) III, 7: "Multae ponuntur evasiones Parisiensium articulorum. Quidam enim, ut Britanni sive Angli, dicunt illam excommunicationem non transire mare, hoc est non se extendi extra dyocesim parisinam. Alii vero quod non transeunt alpes"; IX, 5: "Anathema parisinum dicunt Angli non transire mare (ipsi enim dividuntur a Gallis Occeano mari), et Itali aiunt not transire alpes. Hoc est non transit dyocesim parisinam." These examples are cited in Carlo Dionisotti, 'Umanisti dimenticati?', in Giuseppe Billanovich, Augusto Campana, Carlo Dionisotti, and Paolo Sambin [eds.], *Italia medioevale e umanistica IV (1961)* (Padova 1961), pp. 287–321; see p. 296.

criteria,[62] which seem to Pico the only foundation of faith. He adds to his conclusion a joke: just as the English say that these articles do not cross the sea, we Italians could say that they do not cross the Alps. These articles are only opinions of some Parisian Doctors, Frenchmen's folly, which the English or the Italians or any other believers are not obliged to accept. They represent a certain legitimate theological school or mode of thought; but they cannot be regarded as a foundation for faith or for condemnation. Pico blames the papal commission:

> Wherefore though my conclusion is against the article, let those who condemned me remember that they were entirely mistaken in my condemnation, because they said that my conclusion was against the Apostle's Creed, when they should have said that my conclusion was against the Parisian creed, although also this is a lie as we have presented before.[63]

Thus, those who condemned Pico do not distinguish between the *Symbolum Apostolicum* and the *symbolum Parisinum*. They are confusing the articles of faith, that is, the *Symbolum Apostolicum*, with the Parisian articles, which are merely the *symbolum Parisinum*. By mixing up a universal creed which is binding on all Christians with local articles of faith binding only the Parisians, they are in fact mixing up faith and opinion.

After another detailed discussion concerning Thomas and the standard theological way of dealing with the same problem, in which Pico again uses some typical scholastic terms and adopts an agressive tone,[64] he restates his purpose: to posit his conclusion as probable and to show that this same conclusion was accepted by many excellent Doctors.[65]

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[62] See n. 42 and context.

[63] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 130: "Quare etsi conclusio mea esset contra articulum, meminerint qui me damnabant, quod omnino in me damnando errabant, quia dicebant, quod conclusio mea erat contra symbolum Apostolicum, cum debuissent dicere, quod erat contra symbolum Parisinum, quanquam et hoc est falsum, ut prius ostendimus."

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 132: "sed ista est valde rudis probatio"; "… rudis est iste Magister"; "… dico quod adhuc est rudior prima ratione"; p. 133: "ex quibus sequitur, quod secundum Henricum iste Magister sit male dispositus ad studium philosophiae naturalis, peius ad studium Metaphysicae, pessime ad studium Theologiae, quae etiam est de abstractioribus: relinquitur ergo ei solum aptitudo ad Mathematica, in quibus cum se non exercuerit, quod iudicium de eo faciendum sit, relinquatur ipsimet ut iudicet." The reference is most probably to Henry of Ghent (c. 1217–1293), a famous and influential teacher of theology in Paris.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 135: "… et ego propter hoc solum, id est propter reverentiam universitatis Parisiensis, nolui ponere hanc meam conclusionem, nisi tanquam probabilem, etiam quod viderem ipsam secundum viam multorum probatissimorum doctorum posse etiam assertive poni"; p. 136: "Recolligendo ergo breviter dico, Quod Christus veraciter descenderit ad inferos, et quod per realem praesentiam fuit in inferno. sed dico quod

But what is the purpose of these detailed and technical discussions? Since Pico was not a professional theologian, one possible answer could be that he wanted to demonstrate his competence in theology. Of course, proving his competence in theology is an important part of defending himself. But I think there is much more to it. It appears that Pico regarded the *Apologia* as a substitute for the public disputation on the nine hundred theses that he planned to hold in Rome in 1486. It is well-known that the publication of the *Theses* should have been followed by a public disputation, where Pico was supposed to introduce his reasons and explanations for his conclusions, and refute arguments of every philosopher and theologian who wanted to participate in this dispute. In other words, the *Theses* are just like musical notes without any performance instructions; the *Apology* contains the instructions. This text is, in fact, a written account of Pico's side in a disputation which never took place.[66] His detailed and dialectical discussions are critical observations on the authoritative status of patristic and scholastic theology. In these observations Pico combines some of the new humanistic intuitions and methods of philology and history with scholastic critical observations:

> Because if Thomas in his first book on the *Sentences* holds this way [i.e., presence through effect, like Pico], and he also [holds] that the reason why an angel is in a place is its operation, it seems that also the thesis [Pico's thesis on Christ's descent into hell] is true according to Thomas. Therefore when I say [in the thesis], "not as Thomas posits", it seems that I believed something different concerning that descent than what I

non eo modo veraciter et praesentialiter fuit, ibi quo dicit Thomas et communis via, quia scilicet sua substantia, non fuit sibi ratio essendi in loco, ut ponunt illi, sed sua operatio. Et haec opinio quam sit probabilis, et a quam multis Catholicis et excellentissimis doctoribus credita, iam satis patuit supra, quod etiam de virtute sermonis sit vera, et non haeretica iudicanda, satis explicavimus, scimus enim quod illa est vera."

[66] Pico sees public debate—an interim stage of dialectic disputation before writing—as a means of removing all difficulties in order to reach a general explanation that will leave no room for argument; the existence of disagreement undermines the truth. He adds public debate—one of the common practices of the Middle Ages—to his range of methods for examining opinions to reach the probable truth or *concordia*. See *ibid.*, p. 148: "Cum enim quid disputandum proponitur, brevis et concisa, et inexplicita proponitur propositio, in se et verborum et sensuum multiplices implicans difficultates, in ipso disputandi congressu dissolvendas, alioquin si omnia ibi explicarentur, disputationi locus non relinqueretur: propterea ambiguam, obscuram vel aequivocam propositionem ponens disputandam, ideo excusatur, quia futurum est, ut inter disputandum ipsam distinguat, et declaret: qui vero doctrinaliter aliquid literis mandant, id faciunt scribendo, quod hic fit disputando, quare ibi omnia clara, dilucida et expedita esse debent."

said. But they [those who condemned the theses or conclusions] would not have had this difficulty if they had considered well my theses; for my opinion is that, regarding the way separated things [e.g., separated souls] exist in a place, Thomas holds various opinions on this matter and does not follow the same opinion everywhere. Therefore although in his first book on the *Sentences* it seems that he holds the way which I follow, nevertheless in the conclusion and elsewhere, for instance in the fourth book on the *Sentences*, and most of all in the third part of the *Summa*—where he treats this descent (and Thomas' opinion should be determined from that part of the *Summa* more than from the *Scriptum*)[67] his opinion seems in agreement with the opinion of the Scotists, that [Christ's soul] was there by essence in such a way that its essence was its reason for being able to be there (*locabilitas*), and not just its effect or operation. For Thomas says there that Christ's soul was by effect in other parts of hell, but it was by essence in Limbo etc.[68]

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[67] The reference is unlikly to be to the *Summa* itself, although it is the last to be mentioned, but probably to the fourth book of the *Sententiae*.

[68] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 136: "Quia si Thomas in primo sententiarum [d. 37, q. 3, a. 1] tenet istam viam, etiam ipse quod operatio sit ratio angelum esse in loco, videtur quod conclusio etiam sit vera secundum Thomam, quare cum ego dicam, non ut ponit Thomas, videtur quod aliud ego sim opinatus de illo descensu, quam id quod dixi. Hunc autem scrupulum non haberent, si bene meas conclusiones considerassent, ego enim huius sum opinionis, quod Thomas in hac materia, de modo essendi in loco, rerum separatarum, diversa senserit, et non ubique eandem sequutus sit opinionem. quare licet in primo sententiarum, videatur tenere istam viam quam ego sequor, in conclusione tamen et alibi, ut in quarto sententiarum, et maxime in tertia parte Summae [q. 52, a. 3], ubi tractat de hoc descensu, et ex qua potius quam ex Scripto iudicanda est opinio eius, videtur esse cum opinione Scotistarum, Quod ita fuit ibi per essentiam, quod sua essentia fuerit sibi ratio locabilitatis et non effectus solum vel operatio. Dicit enim Thomas ibi, Quod anima Christi fuit per effectum in aliis partibus inferni, per essentiam autem in lymbo etc." *Per effectum* and *per essentiam* are scholastic terms. The first means the effect being observed without the presence of the cause. The second means "present" in the stronger sense of the word. On Pico the philologist see Sebastiano Gentile, 'Pico filologo', in Gian Carlo Garfagnini [ed.], *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola—Convegno internazionale di studi nel cinquecentesimo anniversario della morte* (1494–1994), 2 vols. (Città di Castello 1997), vol. 2, pp. 465–490. By emphasizing Pico's critical observations of patristic and scholastic theology, it is not my intention to underestimate the "hard and critical look at the Christian tradition" we can find in scholastic theology, presented, for instance, in the cases of a follower of Gilbert of Poitiers and Peter Lombard, discussed by Marcia L. Colish, 'From the Sentence Collection to the Sentence Commentary and the *Summa*: Parisian Scholastic Theology, 1130–1215', in Jacqueline Hamesse [ed.], *Manuels*… pp. 9–29; see the examples on pp. 14–15. Debates concerning the opinions of Thomas began shortly after his death in 1274. In the fifteenth century the Dominican Peter of Bergamo listed in his *Concordantiae textuum discordantium divi Thomae Aquinatis* 1222 contradictions which can be found in Thomas' writings. For a detailed discussion of the conflicting opinions in the fifteenth century regarding the Thomistic principle of individuation see Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen, 'The Thomistic Principle of Individuation in 15th-Century Thomistic and Albertist

Pico argues that Thomas did not hold the same opinion on this question in different texts, but instead held opposite opinions in different places. In some texts it seems that he thinks that Christ descended into hell *per effectum*, in other texts Aquinas says things that might make one think this happened *per essentiam*. On the next page Pico introduces what he takes to be Thomas' inconsistency on a variety of themes, such as the things produced from decomposed matter (spontaneous generation), the composition of the heavens, indeterminate dimensions, reflected and direct action, the way in which Christ's soul was connected to his body, and Christ's knowledge.[69] Pico makes the strong claim that Thomas supported contradictory opinions in different places, and gives detailed references. Therefore, Pico seems to say, it is very difficult to know what Thomas thought about any particular issue; this is subject to interpretation, which is largely arbitrary. Pico drew attention to a serious difficulty: there are conflicting opinions. As we will see, Pico goes on to say that some consistent criterion must be determined and systematically applied in order to identify the more probable opinions that are in harmony with the Christian truth. For our purpose here, it is important to note that Pico is doing something completely different from what we might typically find in a scholastic text. Pointing out inconsistencies in the writings of the same Doctor was not an unusual practice in scholastic controversies. A Scotist might

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Sources', in *Medioevo* XVIII (1992), pp. 327–357. Peter of Bergamo is mentioned on pp. 337–338.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 137: "Nec debet alicubi videri mirabile, quod Thomas in uno loco sequatur unam opinionem et in alio aliam, nam et in primo sententiarum [d. 10, q. 1, a. 5] sequitur opinionem commentatoris de genitis ex putrefactione, quam deinde in septimo Metaphysicae [*In Metaph.* VII, Lectio VI, 1394–1405, esp. 1398–1403] et alibi reprobat. Item in secundo sententiarum [d. 14, q. 1, a. 2] sequitur opinionem commentatoris de materia coeli, quam deinde et in secundo coeli [*De coelo et mundo* 2, 1] reprobat et in Summa [I, 1, q. 66, a. 3]. Item in quarto [d. 12, q. 1, a. 2] et in quaestionibus super Boetium de trinitate [2, 4, 4, rc 1/2], tenet viam commentatoris de dimensionibus interminatis, et in libello deinde proprio, ut creditur, et in multis aliis locis illam non tenet. Item in primo sententiarum dicit, quod eadem actione intelligitur ipsum intelligibile et ipsum intelligere. In prima vero parte summae [I, q. 1, a. 115], et in tertio sententiarum tenet actionem reflexam differre a directa. Item in scripto tenet, quod anima Christi secundum quod corpori coniungibilis fuerit, sicut anima viatoris, secundum vero quod, verbo coniungibilis ut anima comprehensoris. In Summa autem [III, q. 2, a. 5] tenet, quod anima Christi totaliter, et quantum ad omnia, fuit sicut anima comprehensoris, et quod ipsa claritatis impassibilitatisque dotem in corpus non transfuderit, fuisse ex dispensatione divina. Item et de scientia Christi aliter sentit in Scripto et aliter in Summa, et ita de multis aliis, quod est videre, in quibus ipse diversas diversis in locis sequutus est opiniones."

show that a Thomist is inconsistent in order to reject the Thomist's view. As we shall see, Pico points out inconsistencies not to show that Thomas is wrong, but to show that all such opinions are only probable.

What can we learn about Pico's attitude towards scholastic theology from these critical discussions? First of all, in the writings of theologians we can find contradictory statements. The theologian who contradicts himself is none other than Saint Thomas Aquinas. But Pico is using Thomas only as an example for determining the nature of theological opinion in itself, and its relation to the faith:

> This is what made me believe in a probable way (*probabiliter*), that Thomas in this article is walking with the Scotists [i.e., Thomas and the Scotists hold that angels are in a place *per effectum* and not *praesentialiter*]. But no matter what Thomas' opinion is, it is not to the point, because to make a mistake about Thomas' opinion is not to make a mistake in faith, and often there is a variety of opinions among Thomists about his opinion. It is enough, and it seems very clear, that when I advanced the conclusion, I believed that this was Thomas' opinion [i.e., that Christ descended *praesentialiter*]; and what I derive [from Thomas] now is a proposition with a different meaning than I held then. And what I believed in the first place, and this was my view concerning Thomas' opinion when I advanced the conclusions [i.e. theses], becomes very clear from this, from the fact that I advanced this conclusion: that Thomas and Scotus do not differ when it comes to explaining the angels' mode of being in a place.[70]

When he wrote the *Theses*, Pico thought Thomas held that Christ descended *per essentiam* just like the Scotists held. When he discovered that Thomas also held a contradictory view—that Christ's descent was *per effectum* only—he realized that opinions like these can only be held in a probable way (*probabiliter*).

To be mistaken about Thomas' opinion, which as we have seen is not so rare in the light of his inconsistent opinions, is not to be

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[70] *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137: "hoc me movit ad probabiliter credendum, Thomam in hoc articulo ambulare cum Scotistis, sed quicquid sit de opinione Thomae, nihil ad propositum, quia errare in opinione Thomae, non est errare in fide, et saepe est multiplex opinio inter Thomistas de opinione eius. sufficit hoc quod evidenter apparet, quod cum ego posui conclusionem, credidi hanc esse opinionem Thomae, et quod ego nunc extorqueo, propositionem ad sensum alienum, ab eo quem tunc habebam. Quod enim ego hoc a principio crediderim, et haec fuerit sententia mea, de opinione Thomae, cum posui conclusiones, ex hoc patet evidentissime, quia ego istam posui conclusionem, quod de modo essendi in loco angelorum non differunt Thomas et Scotus." Note that theological opinions are described here as something distinct from faith, and also that Pico's own position is described as something which he "believes in a probable way": again, the Academic *probabile*.

mistaken in the faith; and even among Thomists there are often varied opinions concerning the opinion of Thomas, says Pico. He is drawing the boundary between theological opinion, on the one hand, and the faith, on the other, by emphasizing the changeable nature of opinion. How can we determine the relation between the one and unchangeable faith and the changeable opinions? Pico is insisting on this essential difference:

> And as to the contradictory of this statement [i.e. the statement that the reason for separate substances being in this or that place, according to the way mentioned before, is their operation], through the common way in theological issues we can similarly understand the way that is generally held in that University at which, at the time of the man who spoke like this, the study of theology was flourishing, *is not a matter of faith*. And today, at the University of Paris, where the study of theology is more flourishing than elsewhere, the contradictory of this statement *is not a matter of faith*. And the contradictory of this statement at the University of Paris, which is now generally held, that the finiteness of nature is the reason for separate substance being able to be there (*locabilitas*), *is not a matter of faith*. And the contradictory of this statement [which] both Scotus and the greatest part of Nominalists hold—the above-mentioned opinion—and Thomas seems to hold it in the third part of the *Summa*, where he speaks of Christ's descent, *is not a matter of faith*. Thus I continue: if contradictories of those statements are not *a matter of faith* it follows that to posit, to believe, and to dispute those sayings is not in itself heretical or against faith, nor can the one who posits, holds, and disputes those sayings separately or all together be accused of heresy.[71]

At no time, neither in Thomas' day nor in Pico's day, was the manner of Christ's descent a matter of faith. And thus, according to Pico, as long as you stayed within the confines of the faith (the Bible and the

[71] *Ibid.*, pp. 138–139: "Et contradictorium huius dicti [ratio essendi in loco in his vel ibi modo supra declarato separatis substantiis est operatio non finitatio naturae], per communem viam, in rebus Theologicis congruenter possumus intelligere viam, quae communiter tenetur in ea universitate, in qua tempore sic dicentis, magis viget studium theologiae, *non est de fide*. Et contradictorium huius dicti, hoc tempore, in universitate Parisiensi magis viget studium theologiae quam alibi, *non est de fide*. Et contradictorium huius dicti in universitate Parisiensi, nunc communiter tenetur, quod finitatio naturae sic ratio locabilitatis substantiae separatae, *non est de fide*. Et contradictorium huius dicti Scotus et maior pars Nominalium tenet, supra dictam opinionem, et Thomas eam videtur tenere, in tertia parte Summae, ubi ait de descensu Christi: *non est de fide* [q. 52, a. 3]. Tunc sic. Si contradictoria horum dictorum *non sunt de fide*, sequitur quod ista dicta ponere credere et disputare non est in se haereticum, aut contra fidem, nec ipsa disiunctive vel copulative ponens tenens et disputans potest accusari de haeresi." Pico uses here the rhetorical device known as *relatio* (ἀναφορά): almost every sentence repeats—usually at its end—the phrase *non est de fide* (not in a matter of faith).

first Ecumenical Councils), you cannot hold an opinion on the matter that might be heretical.

Pico is clearly distinguishing between the faith and the different theological opinions and schools. The faith and theological opinion exist on two distinct levels. He repeats this point again and again. It is not heretical in itself *ponere, credere, et disputare*—to posit, to believe, and to discuss such issues—and someone who does these things cannot be accused of heresy.[72] And what about those who accused him?

> It is like this too about all other things about which, even if someone can be uncertain whether they are true or false, yet no one is so uncultivated, so ignorant in all learning, so unacquainted with the faith and with those things which belong to the faith, that he would say that these things cannot be believed without heresy and thus [no one would say] that their contradictories are a matter of the faith.[73]

Clearly Pico thinks that the members of the papal commission were making a type of category mistake when they branded as heretical statements of his that were not about matters of faith.

Indeed, the accusations which particularly catch his attention reflect on the part of professional theologians ignorance of the faith, and of things which belong to the faith. Pico goes on to point to a basic theological distinction with which his accusers should have been familiar:

> But those who hold something that is not a matter of faith as if it were a matter of faith—they think wrongly about faith. Because it is against God's maxim in the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy: you shall not add to the word that I speak to you: neither shall you take away from it. Therefore, as [we have seen] previously, those who think wrongly about my conclusion, think wrongly about the faith.[74]

Faith should not be involved here, says Pico. Those who talk about the faith in this context think wrongly about the faith. They are mix-

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[72] This may appear like an *ad hoc* position, intended to justify Pico in his particular situation. In fact this is already Pico's position in his *Conclusiones*. It lies at the very foundation of his proposal to submit various theological positions to a disputation.

[73] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 139: "ita de aliis omnibus, de quibus etiam, si quis potest dubitare, vera sint an falsa, nemo tamen tam rudis est, tam expers omnis doctrinae, tam ignarus fidei, et eorum quae ad fidem attinent, qui diceret illa credi non posse absque haeresi, et sic eorum contradictoria esse de fide."

[74] *Ibid.*: "Sed qui aliquid tenent, esse de fide, quod non sit de fide, male sentiunt de fide. quia contra dictum Domini Deuteronomii 4. Non addetis ad verbum quod ego loquor vobis, neque minuetis ab eo: ergo de conclusione mea male, ut supra sentientes de fide male sentiunt." Pico uses the same verse at the end of his discussion of Origen, *ibid.*, p. 224.

ing up faith with opinions, and thus find themselves *contra dictum Domini Deuteronomii 4*: "Non addetis ad verbum quod vobis ego loquor neque auferetis ex eo."[75] It seems that Pico is citing from memory and that this is the reason for the changes in his citation. It is forbidden, then, to add or to remove a word from the Scriptures, the first and ultimate foundation of the faith (Pico understands this verse in a sense much wider than that of its biblical context. In that chapter of Deuteronomy, the context is that of laws and commandments: *praecepta, iudicia, mandata*). In Pico's response to the papal commission, and elsewhere, he is criticizing among other things, exactly this: confusing divine and human things,[76] or the faith and theological opinions.

Now everything is ready for Pico's final attack on the papal commission concerning this thesis:

> And in like manner they could employ the sayings of the Holy Scripture against him in some manner or another—if Scotus—who relies on the evidence of Francis does not lie, that even about the very descent of Christ, not to mention about the way of descending, there is no explicit mention in the Evangelic doctrine; and thus the presumption we made at the beginning—what is obvious from the way in which Durandus perhaps used to interpret the authorities of Scripture, things which would seem to work against him. On the authorities of saints, it is possible perhaps to adduce many [opinions] of those [among them] who say that Christ's soul was in hell for three days, just as his body was in the grave, and similar things. And whatever Durandus' fantasy may be—e.g., the manner in which he explained the above-mentioned authorities—perhaps when speaking it seems that one speaks of the soul and not of the whole composite, since it was by means of that soul [of his] that He [Christ] operated. And no matter what this man would say—whose opinion neither do I hold nor did I ever—I say and declare firmly that this reasoning is not valid: this opinion is against the sayings of

[75] Dt 4, 2. I have given the Douai translation, as closer to the Vulgate.

[76] See, e.g., in Pico's *Expositiones in Psalmos*, ed. Antonino Raspanti (Firenze 1997), p. 116 [Exposition on Ps 11, 2–3]: "Quoniam prisci illi viri sanctissimi ex hac valle miseriae ad Dei montem ascenderunt; quoniam qui se Dei legem custodire fatentur, ad hippochrisim lapsi, humanis divina confundunt et, inanibus caeremoniis freti, verum Dei cultum profanaverunt, simplices, puros et spiritu pauperes corruperunt, nec sanctus aliquis causam tuam defendit, ideo tu auxiliare." Regarding the idea of *humanis divina confundunt* in classical sources and especially in the ancient Roman religion, see John Glucker, 'Augustiora', in *Grazer Beiträge* 19 (1993), pp. 51–101, especially pp. 65–84. Pico's context is, of course, Christian, but it does deal with the proper law of God as contrasted to empty ceremonies. Note the contrast between *prisci illi viri sanctissimi* and *qui se Dei legem custodire* ***fatentur***. In our context of the *Apologia*, we are speaking of divine authority and human additions in the wider sense of faith, including matters of belief and dogma.

Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory, and similarly of other Church Doctors. Therefore [this opinion] is heretical, and the truth of this saying, just as it was believed by all the good and subtle theologians, thus it will be approved [proved?] evidently by me. And concerning the writings of the holy Doctors that were placed out of the biblical canon, they should be handed down and read, and held with due reverence, and yet their sayings have no such firm authority and immutability, that it would not be allowed to contradict them, and [it is allowed] to have doubts about them unless they were either evidently and expressly proved otherwise by Scripture, or that it would be determined firmly by the Church who authorizes that they hold firm and indubitable truth. Therefore by the sayings of the saints which are clearly outside the canon of the Bible, an opinion cannot be judged to be clearly heretical, since where there is no infallible truth there is no certain and indubitale faith. And since certain faith rests upon infallible truth, indeed regarding such things there is no infallible assent nor firm adhering; and indeed it follows that where there are no certain truth and indubitale faith, to give assent to this is always done with doubt and with caution against falsehood. And since Augustine says in the epistle to Jerome and in the eleventh book against Faustus chapters 7 and 16 against the same Faustus, if Scripture does not contain infallible truth, and in any part of it false things are discovered, then certain faith does not remain in it, [faith] by which Scripture should be trusted firmly; and because of a falsehood discovered in one part of it, all [the Scriptures] are considered suspect, and thus the faith would founder.[77]

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[77] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 143: "Dicta itidem scripturae sacrae allegare, contra eum nescio quo modo poterunt, si non mentitur Scotus, qui dicit teste Francisco, quod etiam de ipso descensu Christi, nedum de modo descensus, non habetur expressa mentio in doctrina Evangelica, et perpraemissa a nobis in principio, quod patet de modo, quo uteretur forte Durandus [Durandus of St Pourçain] ad exponendum authoritates scripturae, quae viderentur esse contra eum. De authoritatibus sanctorum forte multas possent adducere, dicentium, fuisse animam Christi in triduo in inferno, sicut corpus fuit in sepulchro: et similia. Et quicquid sit de phantasia Durandi, quo scilicet modo ipso supradictas authoritates exponeret, forte dicendo de anima hoc dici, et non de toto composito, quia per animam principaliter illa sit operatus. Quicquid, inquam, ipse dicat. cuius ego opinionem nec teneo, nec unquam tenui, ego hoc dico, et firmiter assero, non valere istam consequentiam: Haec opinio est contra dicta Augustini vel Hieronymi vel Gregorii, et sic de caeteris doctoribus ecclesiae. ergo est haeretica, et huius dicti veritas, sicut est a bonis omnibus et subtilibus theologis credita, ita a me etiam evidenter probabitur. Quam enim sanctorum doctorum scriptura, extra canonem Bibliae posita, sit tradenda et legenda, et cum debita reverentia suscipienda, non tamen sunt eorum dicta ita firmae authoritatis et immobilitatis, ut eis contradicere non liceat, et circa ea dubitare nisi vel per scripturam sacram aliter probentur evidenter, et expresse, vel firmiter per Ecclesiam ipsa authorisantem determinatum fuerit, illa firmam veritatem et indubiam continere. Ideo per dicta sanctorum, extra canonem Bibliae praecise, non potest convinci opinio haeretica manifeste, nam ubi non est infallibilis veritas, ibi nec fides certa et indubia. Cum fides certa veritati infallibili

As we have seen, Pico claimed that the actual manner of Christ's descent into hell is not mentioned explicitly in the "Evangelical doctrine". Thus, the manner of Christ's descent belongs to the realm of opinions (as opposed to the fact that Christ descended, which is a matter of faith). He examines the opinion of Durandus of St Pourçain (c. 1275–1332/4) and concludes that his view that Christ descended into hell as a *compositum* of *anima et corpus*—an opinion which he himself does not hold—also seems, but only seems, to go against what is said in the Scriptures. But Pico does not accept that this opinion is heretical just because it appears to contradict the accepted interpretation of Scripture, or because it goes against the opinions of Augustine, Jerome, Gregory and other Doctors of the Church. He asserts that the right opinion, which was believed by all good theologians, will also obviously be approved (*probabitur*) by him. It is clear that here Pico is using the verb *probare*, in relation to *probabile*, in the sense of "approving" rather than "proving" or "demonstrating". An important part of the passage under discussion is Pico's effort, through quotations from, among others, Augustine, to found the faith upon *infallibilis veritas*—the only criterion for *fides certa et indubia*. Otherwise everything falls. Such infallible truth should be found in the Scriptures only (although once in this passage the authority of the Church is also mentioned; I shall return to this point shortly).

What about the truth of theological opinions of both Fathers and Doctors? Even where these opinions appear to agree with an accepted interpretation of Scripture, they can be of no more than *probabilis veritas*. But in order to fully understand what Pico means we need to examine the context:

> Since he is never found to have retracted such an opinion, if this [opinion] is simply heretical, and consequently already determined against by the Church, it follows that Durandus died as heretic; o distinguished order of preachers and greatest splendor of our religion, can it endure

innitatur, imo circa talia non est assensus infallibilis, nec adhaesio firma: ex quo enim ibi certa veritas et indubia fides non est, ei semper assentitur, cum dubio et cum formidine falsi. quia dicit Augustinus in epistola ad Hieronymum [*Epistula* 29, 3.3] et undecimo libro contra Faustum cap. 7 et 16 contra eundem Faustum [chapter 11], si scriptura non continet ineffabilem veritatem, et in aliqua parte sui falsa invenitur, non remanet in ea certa fides, qua ei firmiter credatur, et propter falsitatem repertam in una sui parte, tota suspecta habetur, et sic fides titubaret." In these contexts Augustine uses neither the word *ineffabilis* nor the word *infallibilis*, but it is obvious from the context that Pico meant *infallibilem veritatem*. Whether the mistake is Pico's or the editor's I have no means of checking.

these things that your first Doctor perhaps after Thomas, or without doubt one of the first, whose books are being held, read, and honoured every day in your schools, monasteries, and libraries, has now been declared heretic? Take up the defence of your Doctor, I have already done my own, and even you, o Church, take up your own defence, you who have allowed these things for so many years, and even now you allow Durandus to be read in public; and such impious heresy against those teachers of his, either because of ignorance you have never noticed it, or by negligence and contempt for things divine you have not condemned it, although you knew it. Because if they say that there was no need for a new condemnation since this opinion is already among condemned things, from this it follows first what I said above, that Durandus certainly had died as a heretic. Secondly [it follows that] also Capreolus and Durandellus and many other Doctors who recite Durandus' opinion and still do not accuse this [opinion] of heresy were unacquainted with, and ignorant of faith, since they did not know how to distinguish a heretical [opinion] from not heretical [could also be: a heretic from non heretic]. Thirdly, let those Fathers tell me where they read the condemnation of this opinion. I indeed would confess on my part that I do not remember that I have ever read this [condemnation]. Indeed they cannot bring even a single condemnation of the councils against Durandus, since not only has this opinion never been condemned in the councils but also it has never even been mentioned in any of the councils.[78]

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[78] *Ibid.*, pp. 142–143: "Qui cum talem opinionem nunquam inveniatur retractasse, si ipsa sit simpliciter haeretica, et consequenter contra iam determinata ab Ecclesia, sequitur quod Durandus mortuus sit haereticus, o insignis ordo Praedicatorum, et nostrae religionis maximus splendor, potest haec pati doctorem tuum primum fortasse post Thomam, aut sine dubio inter primos, cuius libri quotidie in tuis scholis, in tuis claustris, in tuis bibliothecis habentur, leguntur, coluntur, nunc esse pronunciatum haereticum? agas tu causam doctoris tui, ego meam egi, imo tu o Ecclesia tuam agas causam, quae permisisti per tot annos, et nunc, permittis Durandum publice legi et tam nephandam iuxta hos magistros illius haeresim aut per ignorantiam nunquam agnovisti, aut per negligentiam et rei divinae contemptum agnitam non damnasti. Quod si dicant non opus fuisse nova damnatione, cum haec opinio sit de iam damnatis, primo ex hoc sequitur, quod dixi supra. Durandum, scilicet mortuum esse haereticum. secundo et Capreolum et Durandellum, et multos alios doctores, qui opinionem Durandi recitant, et eam tamen de haeresi non arguunt, ignaros fuisse et rudes in fide, nec scientes discernere haereticum a non haeretico. tertio dicant mihi isti patres, ubi ipsi istius opinionis legerunt damnationem? ego quidem ut de me fatear, me eam usquam legisse non memini. Conciliorum profecto determinationem nullam contra Durandum afferre possunt, cum non solum damnata haec nunquam fuerit opinio in conciliis, sed nec in aliquo eorum de ipsa habita mentio est." John Capreolus (c. 1380–1444) was one of the representative Thomists in the early fifteenth century, and published *Defensio theologiae divi doctoris Thomae de Aquino*. Durandellus is the nickname given to Durandus of Aurillac (c. 1300–1380), to distinguish him from the better known Durandus of St. Pourçain. Durandellus, during his teaching in Paris in the 1330s and also in a book from that period which was not published, defended Thomas

There is no historical basis for placing Durandus in the context of heresy. So what does Pico mean by the words: *ergo est haeretica*? He is signifying a gap in the reasoning of the commission which represents the dominant scholastic theology. The commission has identified wrong opinion as heresy. But to think of Durandus as heretic is historically absurd. Durandus is *nostrae religionis maximus splendor*, one of the first theologians after Thomas, whose books are studied every day in the schools and monasteries of the Church and whose opinion was never even mentioned—not to say condemned—in the Church councils. Pico regards the opinion of Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory as the *vera opinio* or *veritas* which *evidenter probabitur*. This is the maximum we can reach in the realm of opinion: *probare opinionem probabilem*. All good and subtle theologians believe in this opinion. But what exactly is the status of the opinions of theologians and saints? They should be treated with reverence, but we have to remember that the *sanctorum doctorum scriptura* is *extra canonem Bibliae posita*. This means that their opinions can be questioned, unless *vel per scripturam sacram aliter probentur evidenter, et expresse, vel firmiter per Ecclesiam ipsa authorisantem determinatum fuerit*. Only when clearly proved by the *Scriptura Sacra*, or by the authority of the Church, can we say that *illa [sanctorum doctorum scriptura] firmam veritatem et indubiam continere*. And here Pico reaches the conclusion: "And therefore the sayings of the saints, which are clearly outside the biblical canon, cannot be used to condemn an opinion manifestly as a heresy; for wherever there is no infallible truth neither is there the certain and indubitable faith" (*Ideo per dicta sanctorum, extra canonem Bibliae praecise, non potest convinci opinio haeretica manifeste, nam ubi non est infallibilis veritas, ibi nec fides certa et indubia*). This indeed goes to the heart of the problem: for Pico, the words of the saints can no longer be used as the basis for proving that a certain opinion should be considered heretical; the *dicta sanctorum*

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against the attacks of Durandus. The context shows Pico's familiarity with the Thomist and anti-Thomist controversies of the last few generations. For some more theological background see H.A. Oberman, *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine A Fourteenth Century Agustinian—A Study of His Theology in its Historical Context* (Utrecht 1957), especially pp. 28–48; Gordon Leff, *Medieval Thought—From Saint Augustine to Ockham* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex 1958), especially pp. 255–303. We should note here that although Durandus was not condemned or even mentioned in the councils, he faced some difficulties in regard to his opinions; see Leff, *Medieval Thought*… p. 276: "In Durandus's case, however, it involved a struggle which caused him to rewrite his main work, the *Commentary on the Sentences*, three times: the second edition was after the condemnation of certain of his doctrines at the Dominican chapter-general of 1309. In the third edition, during the 1320s, he reverted to many of his initial positions."

are clearly *extra canonem Bibliae*.[79] This is why those works—i.e., most of patristic and all of scholastic theology—cannot help us solve the problem of determining which opinion is true and which is heretical. Where there is no infallible truth, certain and indubitable faith also cannot exist, claims Pico. We are in need of a new method of doing theology. By means of such a method we should be able to identify those opinions which are *probabiles* in relation to the faith. Unless the faith is founded on certain and indubitable truth, it totters, claims Pico, drawing on the words of Augustine. And since an indubitable faith is based on infallible truth, theological speculations should be based on *assensus*[80]

[79] This does not mean that Pico here directly anticipates the tendency of some of the Reformation movements to rely on Scripture alone. We have to be careful not to fall into anachronism. The relationship between humanism, reformation and counter-reformation is complex. See the historiographical remark of Salvatore I. Camporeale, 'Umanesimo, Riforma e Origini della Controriforma', in *Memorie Domenicane* 20 (1989), pp. 301–307; e.g., p. 301: "Anzitutto, è la linea ideologica dell'umanesimo stesso, che si denota molto più differenziata di quanto avesse lasciato pensare una certa storiografia—sia antica che recente—arroccatta sulla *contrapposizione diretta*, e quasi speculare, tra Riforma e Controriforma. Tale visione storiografica di 'bipolarizzazione' univoca tra Riforma e Controriforma, si è dilatata, ed in forza di ricerche storiche alternative e per tratti autonomi, in una *terza dimensione*: quella dell'*umanesimo*. L'umanesimo, infatti, appare dimensione prospettica irriducibile per sé alla Riforma e (tanto meno) alla Controriforma; che anzi, esso sembra assurgere a 'terzo estremo' entro uno spazio ideologico quanto mai complesso e multiforme." Pico still recognizes the authority of the first councils and he has no quarrel with any of the sacraments and other rituals of the Church, including the ordination of priests. In all this he is still firmly on the side of the Catholic Church, and very far from future positions of the Reformers. The only thing he wants to see changed is the basis of dogmatic theology, what Thomas called *sacra doctrina*. Even there, he still recognizes some Church authority and does not advocate a complete return to Scripture alone. When he says that the works of the saints are *extra canonem Bibliae*, the emphasis is not so much on the *auctoritas* of the Bible, but on the difference between two types of Christian books.

[80] *Adsensus* or *adsensio* is Cicero's translation of the Stoic technical term συγκατάθεσις, giving a firm and unquestioned acceptance to a sense perception or an opinion. See especially Cicero, *Lucullus*, 37–39. We find a more general idea of finding consent or concord or agreement between conflicting natural powers and philosophical doctrines, represented as the task of natural and moral philosophy as well as of dialectic, in Pico's famous speech which he wrote for the opening of the assembly he planned to hold in Rome to discuss his 900 theses. *Discordia* and *dissidia* are contrasted to *pax*, which is related to God (*qui facit pacem in excelsis*), and thus, Empedocles becomes relevant as an interpreter of Job; see Garin [ed.], *De hominis dignitate, heptaplus*… pp. 116–118: "Percontemur et iustum Iob, qui foedus iniit cum Deo vitae prius quam ipse ederetur in vitam, quid summus Deus in decem illis centenis milibus, qui assistunt ei, potissimum desideret: pacem utique respondebit, iuxta id quod apud eum legitur, *qui facit pacem in excelsis*. Et quoniam supremi ordinis monita medius ordo inferioribus interpretatur, interpretetur nobis Iob theologi verba Empedocles philosophus. Hic duplicem naturam in nostris animis sitam, quarum altera sursum tollimur ad caelestia, altera

infallibilis and *adhaesio firma*, infallible agreement and firm adherence; in other words, Pico is here introducing the principle of *concordia*, the guiding principle of his humanist theology. He is using the principle of *concordia* as a criterion for examining opinions. This examination should bring us to those opinions which are the closest to the infallible truth. By doing this, Pico makes patristic and scholastic theology a historical document subject to a type of historical analyses. Henceforth patristic and scholastic theology should only represent different "historical moments" in the history of Christianity, rather than "true doctrines". As such, the opinions of the Church Fathers and Doctors should be put under philological and historical scrutiny, so that all theological opinions and conclusions are examined. If for Valla theology was to be based on a philological and historical analysis of the *Scriptura Sacra*, for Pico theology is a philological and historical examination of the diverse

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deorsum trudimur ad inferna, per litem et amicitiam, sive bellum et pacem, ut suam testantur carmina, nobis significat. In quibus se lite et *discordia* actum, furenti similem profugum a diis, in altum iactari conqueritur. Multiplex profecto, patres, in nobis *discordia*; gravia et intestina domi habemus et plus quam civilia bella. Quae si noluerimus, *si illam affectaverimus pacem*, quae in sublime ita nos tollat ut inter excelsos Domini statuamur, sola in nobis compescet prorsus et sedabit *philosophia moralis primum*, si noster homo ab hostibus inducias tantum quaesierit, multiplicis bruti effrenes excursiones et leonis iurgia, iras animosque contundet. Tum, *si rectius consulentes nobis perpetuae pacis securitatem desideraverimus*, aderit illa et vota nostra liberaliter implebit, quippe quae caesa utraque bestia, quasi icta porca, inviolabile inter carnem et spiritum foedus sanctissimae pacis sanciet. *Sedabit dialectica rationis turbas inter orationum pugnantias et syllogismorum captiones anxie tumultuantis. Sedabit naturalis philosophia opinionis lites et dissidia, quae inquietam hinc inde animam vexant, distrahunt et lacerant.*" Pico continues to emphasize the importance of concord in his speech: he cites, among others, Augustine's *Contra Academicos* III, 19 to show the concord between Plato and Aristotle and relates this argument to later mediaeval philosophers; see pp. 144–146: "Proposuimus primo Platonis Aristotelisque *concordiam* a multis antehac creditam, a nemine satis probatam. Boethius, apud Latinos, id se facturum pollicitus, non invenitur fecisse umquam quod semper facere voluit. Simplicius, apud Graecos idem professus, utinam id tam praestaret quam pollicetur. Scribit et Augustinus in *Academicis* non defuisse plures qui subtilissimis suis disputationibus idem probare conati sint, Platonis scilicet et Aristotelis eamdem esse philosophiam. Joannes item Grammaticus cum dicat apud eos tantum dissidere Platonem ab Aristotele, qui Platonis dicta non intelligunt, probandum tamen posteris hoc reliquit. Addidimus autem et plures locos in quibus Scoti et Thomae, plures in quibus Averrois et Avicennae sententias, *quae discordes existimantur, concordes esse nos asseveramus*." The more technical use of *concordia* as a criterion in Pico's theological method is also related, as we have just seen, to the ancient notion of philosophic concord, common to both Ficino and Pico as well as to other Renaissance thinkers. On this philosophic concord see Frederick Purnell Jr., 'The Theme of Philosophic Concord…'

theological opinions and conclusions of Christian thinkers throughout the ages, by using the criterion of *concordia* in relation to the faith.[81]

In his self-defence against the criticisms of the papal commission with regard to the issue of *infallibilis veritas*, and specifically the words *fides certa veritati infallibili innitatur* and the citation from Augustine, there is another subtext. In the following passages from Thomas Aquinas I italicized expressions which are verbally similar to expressions in the passages of Pico analysed above:

> Therefore sacred scripture, since it has no science above it, disputes with those who deny its principles. It does so through arguing, if the opponent concedes any of the truths established by divine revelation. For example, when disputing with heretics we use authoritative texts of sacred teaching, and through one article of faith argue against those who deny another. If, on the other hand, the opponent believes nothing of what has been revealed by God, there are no avenues available to prove the articles of faith through arguments; yet there is a way to answer whatever arguments might be raised against the faith. *For since faith rests upon infallible truth, and it is impossible that there be a genuine demonstration of what is contrary to the true*, it is plain that any arguments offered against faith are not demonstrations, but rather arguments that can be answered.
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> Nevertheless, sacred teaching makes use of this kind of authority as something *coming from outside its domain, providing merely probable arguments*. When it offers necessary arguments, *it properly uses the canonical scriptures*. It also relies properly on the authority of the other doctors of the Church, *although only for probable arguments*. That is because our faith is based on the revelation made to the Apostles and Prophets who wrote the canonical books rather than on any revelation that might have been given to other doctors. Hence Augustine says in a letter to Jerome: "Only those books of scripture that are called *canonical* have I learned to hold in such honor so as to believe very firmly that none of their authors erred at all in writing them. But other authors I read in such a way that I do not assume that what they have thought or written is true, no matter how much they might excel in holiness and learning."[82]

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[81] This is not to say that Pico did not use philological methods: see, e.g., the exposition on Ps 10, 2 in Pico's *Expositiones in Psalmos*…p. 80. This is one example of Pico also using philological methods, but it appears in a commentary on a biblical text. What interests him in the *Apologia* is not a detailed exposition of any sacred text, but an examination of theological opinions.

[82] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I.I, q. 1, a. 8: "Unde sacra Scriptura cum non habeat superiorem, disputat cum negante sua principia: argumentando quidem, si adversarius aliquid concedat eorum quae per divinam revelationem habentur; sicut per auctoritates sacrae doctrinae disputamus contra haereticos, et per unum articulum contra negantes alium. Si vero adversarius nihil credat eorum quae divinitus revelantur, non remanet amplius via ad probandum articulos fidei per rationes, sed ad solvendum

Thomas is dealing here with two kinds of adversaries, on two different levels: the heretic, in theology; and the philosopher who is against revelation, in philosophy. The *Sacra Scriptura* is founded on revelation, and this is the source of its superiority. If the heretic accepts part of Scripture we must use the authorities of the sacred doctrine and the articles of faith against him. Against an adversary who *nihil credat eorum quae divinitus revelantur*, one has to use *rationes* to refute his own arguments against the faith, if he has such arguments. Here we enter into a philosophical discussion. In this case, claims Thomas, we have no other way but to use better and stronger arguments, which lead to demonstration and refutation. But how are we sure of this? *Cum enim fides infallibili veritati innitatur*: with these words Thomas constructs a bridge between theological and philosophical discussion. Faith rests on infallible truth; this is why it is impossible to produce demonstrations which are contrary to faith. Because of this, *manifestum est probationes quae contra fidem inducuntur, non esse demonstrationes, sed solubilia argumenta.* The arguments of such philosophers contain no necessity; they are *solubilia*, arguments which can be resolved.

What, then, is the connection between demonstration and the authoritative passages of the sacred doctrine? Thomas is very clear that there is a distinction between the philosophical and the theological level. He draws a distinction between three kinds of authoritative passages used in *sacra doctrina.* When various non-Christian authorities, e.g.,

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rationes, si quas inducit, contra fidem. *Cum enim fides infallibili veritati innitatur, impossibile autem sit de vero demonstrari contrarium*, manifestum est probationes quae contra fidem inducuntur, non esse demonstrationes, sed solubilia argumenta…"

"Sed tamen sacra doctrina huiusmodi auctoritatibus utitur quasi *extraneis* argumentis, et *probabilibus*. Auctoritatibus autem *canonicae Scripturae* utitur proprie, ex necessitate argumentando. Auctoritatibus autem aliorum doctorum ecclesiae, quasi arguendo ex propriis, sed *probabiliter*. Innititur enim fides nostra revelationi Apostolis et Prophetis factae, qui canonicos libros scripserunt: non autem revelationi, si qua fuit aliis doctoribus facta. Unde dicit Augustinus, in epistola ad Hieronymum [82 (al. 19), c. I, n. 3: PL 33, 277]: Solis eis Scripturarum libris qui *canonici* appellantur, didici hunc honorem deferre, ut nullum auctorem eorum in scribendo errasse aliquid firmissime credam. Alios autem ita lego, ut, quantalibet sanctitate doctrinaque praepolleant, non ideo verum putem, quod ipsi ita senserunt." I am using the new English translation by Brian Shanley, O.P. See Thomas Aquinas, *The Treatise on the Divine Nature. Summa Theologiae I 1–13*, translated, with commentary by Brian Shanley, O.P., with an introduction by Robert Pasnau (Indianapolis 2006), pp. 12–13. It is possible that some part of Thomas' arguments may be directed, among other things, against the exponents of 'double truth'. This, however, is hardly relevant in our context, since Thomas and Pico agree that there is only one truth. Pico is echoing this passage of Thomas only to support his own view of what is authority and what is heresy in theological issues.

poetry or philosophy, are used, they are considered extrinsic and probable arguments.[83] But when authoritative passages from the Holy Scriptures are used, they are used *proprie, ex necessitate argumentando* ("properly, offering necessary arguments"). Only in the second case does necessity appear in the argumentation. When, however, the authority of the Church's Doctors is used, it should not be considered extrinsic but rather *arguendo ex propriis, sed probabiliter* ("It also relies properly on the authority of the other doctors of the Church, although only for probable arguments"): probability replaces necessity although we are still dealing with *propria*, that is, writings which are intrinsic to the Church although extrinsic to Scripture. Thomas explains that the faith is based solely on the revelation of the Apostles and Prophets who wrote the canonical books.[84] By means of this clear distinction, Thomas removes necessity from the views of all the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. Their ideas and interpretations should be regarded as probable opinions, which can be right or wrong. Those opinions represent their feelings and thoughts, and because of their greatness and sanctity, they should be read and studied; but it is not necessary to accept them.

But why does Pico echo this passages from Thomas? The passage from Thomas allows him both to answer his critics' accusations and to attack their own position. Pico, the "heretical philosopher" knows and accepts the distinction between revealed and non-revealed truth;

[83] Earlier in the text referred to Thomas deals with poetry and philosophy. More generlly on this issue see E.F. Byrne, *Probability and Opinion: A Study in the Medieval Presuppositions of Post-Medieval Theories of Probability* (The Hague 1968), especially pp. 97–138.

[84] It is interesting that Thomas, unlike Pico, does not refer here to the authority of the first councils, and the authority of Augustine appears only implicitly, through Thomas' use of a text from the bishop of Hippo. Other places in which Thomas does speak of the passages of extra-scriptural texts are, e.g., *Summa theologiae* I, q. 61, a. 3: "… praecipue propter sententiam Gregorii Nazianzeni, cuius tanta est in doctrina Christiana auctoritas, ut nullus unquam eius dictis calumniam inferre praesumpserit, sicut nec Athanasii documentis, ut Hieronimus dicit"; I, q. 66, a. 3: "Respondendo dicendum quod caelum empireum non invenitur positum nisi per auctoritates Strabi et Bedae, et iterum per auctoritatem Basilii." Thomas immediately continues to explain that all three of them argued from *rationes*, "hae autem rationes non sunt multum cogentes", and quotes Augustine's solution to this problem as the better one; I, q. 79, a. 8: "Quamvis liber ille non sit magnae auctoritatis." The reference is to a book called *De spiritu et anima* but it is unlikely to be Augustine's book of that name. There were quite a number of books with that title writen in the 11th and 12th centuries. In any case, the passages of Thomas which I have quoted in the text, with what appears to be an even more minimalist position with regard to ultimate truth and authority in the Catholic faith than that of Pico, are more closely related to Pico's arguments.

but he also knows that there can be no theological basis for accusing him of heresy merely because he does not accept Thomas' opinion on every theological question. Could there be a more elegant display of humanist rhetorical skill than using Thomas' own words as the subtext of this self-defence?

Where Pico differs from Thomas is in his use of *concordia* for examining theological opinions. Thomas himself uses the words of Augustine's Epistle to Jerome. Through *concordia* Pico makes of the hints in Augustine a true theological method for solving the contradictory status of various probable opinions. Let us return then to the idea of *concordia* and its source. In order to prove that the opinions of the saints are *extra canonem Bibliae* and thus should not be considered *veritas infallibilis*, Pico gives three arguments: the first is that the Fathers and Doctors themselves have doubts about their own opinions and do not know whether or not they are wrong;[85] the second is that there are disagreements (*discordiae*) between them, and disagreement is a sign of falsehood;[86] and the third is that *veritas infallibilis* is a special privilege of the Scriptures.[87] When introducing the second argument, Pico mentions Augustine:

> Therefore Augustine in the sixteenth book of *The City of God* proves the truth of the sacred Scriptures from the mutual agreement (*concordia*) of its authors, in which all [authors] agree and not one of them differs from the other, since they attest to the indubitable and infallible truth of sacred Scripture.[88]

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[85] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 144: "Prima est qua ipsimet doctores de dictis suis dubitant, an in eis erraverint an non."

[86] *Ibid.*: "Secunda probatio sumitur a discordia, quae est inter ipsos authores. discordia enim in scriptoribus testimonium est falsitatis, cum sit necesse, quod saltem unus discordantium falsum dicat, quia necessario altera pars contradictionis est falsa." Here we have an echo of the ancient skeptical argument from the disegreement among philosophers, διαφωνία τῶν φιλοσόφων: see chapter two n. 82 and context. The formulation of the argument here is very reminiscent of Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.5. See also Eusebius' critique of the φυσικοί in his *Preaparatio Evangelica* I, 8, 14: "τοσαύτη δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ ἡ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐναντιότης, ἐν μὲν οὐδενὶ ἀλλήλοις συμπεφωνηκότων, μάχης δὲ καὶ διαφωνίας τὰ πάντα ἀναπεπληρωκότων." For the mediaeval context see S. Caroti and J. Celeyrette [eds.], *Quia inter doctores est magna dissensio. Les débats de philosophie naturelle à Paris au XIV siècle* (Firenze 2004).

[87] *Ibid.*, pp. 146–147: "Tertia probatio sumitur ex speciali praerogativa sacrae scripturae, et sanctionum universalis ecclesiae, quibus solis concedimus infallibilis veritatis excellentiam."

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 144: "Ideo Augustinus 16 de civitate Dei, probat scripturae sacrae veritatem, ex mutua concordia scriptorum eius, in qua omnes concordant, et nullus ab alio discordat, quod attestantur scripturae sacrae indubie et infallibili veritati." I think that Pico is only remembering vaguely a sentence in the sixteenth book of *De civitate*

Augustine proved the truth of Scripture by showing the *mutua concordia scriptorum eius*, the mutual concord of its authors. In this concord all the authors of the Scriptures are in harmony, with no disagreement between them; and this confirms the infallible truth of the Scriptures. Immediately afterwards Pico adds:

> Indeed the only one who does not know how much disagreement there is in the sayings of the saints that are outside the canonical Scriptures, is someone who has not read their books.[89]

Because of this disagreement, it is certain that at least one of the opinions is false, and consequently those sayings do not rely on infallible truth.[90] Yet in spite of the fact that at least one of the saints must be saying something false, none of them is considered to be a heretic.[91] Pico, it appears, is trying to turn Augustine's statements into a method for the examination of the theological opinions. He distinguishes between outright heresy, on the one hand, which contradicts Sacred Scripture, and false opinion, on the other, which is not heretical but only wrong. Through this distinction Pico creates an area of the *probabile*, in which we can examine different opinions by classifying them not as "true" or "false" opinions, but only by their likelihood (*probabilitas*). The terms are

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Dei, Chapter 9: "Quoniam nullo modo scriptura ista mentitur. Quae narratis praeteritis facit fidem eo, quod eius praedicta conplentur…" But Pico's reason here is not the same as Augustine's in the sentence just cited. In another place in the same work (Book 18, Chapter 41) we come closer to what Pico says: "Denique auctores nostri, in quibus non frustra sacrarum litterarum figitur et terminatur canon, absit ut inter se aliqua ratione dissentiant. Unde non immerito, cum illa scriberent, eis Deum vel per eos locutum, non pauci… crediderunt." I have found the following passages of Augustine which are closer to Pico's argument from *concordia*: *Quaestiones ex Novo Testamento* LXV: "Nam tres Evangelistas verum dixisse ipsa concordia obtestatur"; LXVI: "Concordant ergo Scripturae secundum ea quae revelata sunt. Impossibile est enim discordare unius spiritus viros"; *De Scripturis* I.3: "Sed nos, sicut Paulum et Ioannem contrarios sibi esse non credimus; ita de Moysi et Pauli concordia etiam ipsos [Manichaeos] cogimus confiteri."

[89] *Ibid.*: "Quanta enim sit discordia in dictis sanctorum extra canonicas scripturas, nemo non novit, nisi qui illorum libros non legit."

[90] *Ibid.*, pp. 144–145: "… et constat quod una opinionum est falsa, et per consequens dicta eorum non innituntur ineffabili veritati"; and again more or less the same idea on p. 145: "Dicta ergo istorum, non innituntur infallibili veritati, cum sibi contradicant, quorum una pars necessario est falsa: ut patet per philosophum 4 Metaphysicae [Aristotle, *Metaph.* IV (Γ) 8, 1012b10–13]." Unlike the sentence quoted above in n. 86, where the context of disagreements among philosophers and the verbal echoes point to Cicero, here the reference, as Pico points out, is clearly to Aristotle.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 145: "… unus necessario falsum dicit: et tamen ex hoc neuter eorum haereticus reputatur."

still confusing, since in the realm of Scripture vs heresy, "true" is identified with the infallible faith and "false" with heresy, which is clearly contrary to the infallible faith. Only what contradicts the faith, that is scriptural truth, is heresy. For Pico, our conclusions in the area of opinions will always be merely probable, since they rely, even at the highest level, on some established *concordia* between an opinion and apparent or accepted interpretation of biblical texts. Only after a theological examination, some of the opinions which we have held to be probable will be considered more probable and others less probable with regard to the articles of faith. To make things clear, there are two kinds of probability. The first one could be called weak probability, since it is only based on agreements of some opinions among themselves. This is a weaker *concordia*. The second and stronger probability should be based on a *concordia* between opinions which have been accepted as probable in the weaker sense and scriptural truth. This does not turn such opinions into infallible truth, but it makes them more probable in relation to the truth of faith.

The theological disputation set out in the *Apologia* should be understood, then, as Pico's model for the type of theological examination which was needed in light of the major theological crisis of his age: the problem of true religious authority. This examination of opinions is based on the essential distinction between the Scriptures and any other text; Pico appeals in support of the distinction to Augustine's epistle to Jerome.[92] Following Augustine,[93] Pico invites a critical discussion of his own writings and demands that nothing should be taken for granted,[94] since only the Scriptures *omni errore carent*. He suggests—

[92] *Ibid*., p. 147: "Unde Augustinus contra Hieronymum in epistola ad eum sic dicit. Ego enim fateor charitati tuae solis scripturae Libris, quae iam canones appellantur, didici hunc timorem honoremque deferre, ut nullum horum authorum scribendo errasse firmissime credam, aut si aliquid in eis offendo literis, quod videatur contrarium veritati, nihil aliud quam mendosum esse codicem, vel interpretem non assecutum esse, vel me minime intellexisse, non ambigam. Aliorum autem scripturas ita lego, ut quantalibet sanctitate et doctrina polleant, non ideo verum putem, quia ipsi senserint, sed quia vel per alios locos sacrae scripturae, vel probabili, id est evidenti ratione, quod a vero non abhorreat, persuadere potuerunt, nec te Frater mi, arbitror sic libros tuos legi velle, tanquam Prophetarum et Apostolorum, de quorum scriptis, quod omni errore careant, dubitare nephandum est. absit hoc a pia humilitate et veraci de temetipso cogitatione." For references to Augustine see n. 77 above.

[93] *Ibid*.: "Et ipse Augustinus 3 de Trinitate [Augustine, *De Trinitate* III, 1.2], Sane cum in omnibus literis meis, non solum pium lectorem, sed etiam liberum correctorem."

[94] *Ibid*.: "Veruntamen velut lectorem meum volo mihi esse deditum, ita correctorem nolo, sibi et sicut illis dico, nullis meis literis quasi *scripturis canonicis* inservire, sed in

following closely yet another passage of Augustine—three instruments for examining whether there is something which deviates from the truth in the opinions of bishops: the words of any wiser man; stronger authority; and the more subtle prudence of other bishops and councils.[95] One notes that "stronger authority" is most likely to imply the traditional great names like that of Augustine. But who is to decide who is the wiser man? Here, it appears, Pico himself decides on the Academic criterion of *probabilitas*.

It is important to notice here that all these instruments are relative and thus changeable and not absolute. They are historical products. In this respect Pico's discussion goes beyond his Academic sources. For them *probabilitas* is determined in each case by the agreement of a certain impression or idea with its wider context. Pico applies this

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illis, et quod non credebas cum inveneris, incunctanter crede, in istis autem literis, quod certum non habebas, nisi certum intellexeris, noli firmiter tenere, ita illi dico noli meas literas ex tua opinione vel contentione, sed *ex divina lectione*, vel *inconcussa ratione* corrigere."

[95] *Ibid.*: "… Episcoporum autem literas, quae post confirmatum canonem scriptae sunt, vel scribuntur, et per sermonem forte sapientioris cuiuslibet, et per aliorum Episcoporum graviorem authoritatem doctioremque prudentiam, et per concilia licere repraehendi, si quid in eis forte est a veritate deviatum." See Augustine, *De baptismo contra Donatistas* [Migne, PL IX, 1865], II.3, pp. 128–129: "Quis autem nesciat sanctam Scripturam canonicam, tam Veteris quam Novi Testamenti, certis suis terminis contineri, eamque omnibus posterioribus episcoporum litteris ita praeponi, ut de illa omnino dubitari et disceptari non possit, utrum verum vel utrum rectum sit, quidquid in ea scriptum esse constiterit: episcoporum autem litteras quae post confirmatum canonem vel scriptae sunt vel scribuntur, et per sermonem forte sapientiorem cujuslibet in ea re peritioris, et per aliorum episcoporum graviorem auctoritatem doctioremque prudentiam, et per concilia licere reprehendi, si quid in eis forte a veritate deviatum est: et ipsa concilia quae per singulas regiones vel provincias fiunt, plenariorum conciliorum auctoritati quae fiunt ex universo orbe christiano, sine ullis ambagibus cedere: ipsaque plenaria saepe priora posterioribus emendari…" It is clear that Pico took his three instruments directly from this passage of Augustine. This implies that, both in resorting to the *auctoritas* of Augustine by following him on this issue and in accepting as one of the criteria *graviorem auctoritatem*, Pico wishes to show that, even at the stage of sorting out *opiniones*, mere Academic *probabilitas* is not the sole criterion: as a Catholic, he also needs to refer to high authorities in order to show that his view is not a heresy. Yet notice that we have as one criterion someone who is *sapientior* and *in ea re peritior*: who is to decide that and by what criterion? Even when we have *per aliorum episcoporum graviorem auctoritatem*, Pico, following Augustine himself, adds *doctioremque prudentiam*. Who is to decide on that, and on what criterion? What remains as entirely a matter of *auctoritas* is the third criterion, where the Ecumenical Councils take precedence over local councils. But this criterion already belongs to the second *concordia*, since Pico has agreed that the Ecumenical Councils provide a true and scriptural interpretation of matters of faith.

procedure to opinions expressed over the generations, whose context is the history of theological views. What was for the Academics a synchronic context becomes here a diachronic one.

After Pico has emphasized the consideration of *voluntas* and *intentio* in the interpretations and possible condemnations of theological opinions by citing Gregory the Great,[96] or the importance of *sensus* by citing Jerome,[97] or of *intentio* of the one who is suspected by citing Ockham,[98]—issues which I cannot discuss here at length—he returns to Augustine:

> Because even if before I declared my intention they did this, although perhaps they would be mistaken more excusably, yet if they are truly learned, they could know even by themselves that [this] proposition has a double meaning, which, if they had paid attention to it, not only would they simply have condemned this [proposition] but also they would have been obliged to interpret this meaning more in a good sense. For Augustine in his book on the harmony between the evangelists explains this saying in Matthew: "Judge not, that ye shall not be judged", saying: in this place I esteem that nothing else is meant but only that those deeds [concerning] which there is doubt with what [intention] in mind they are done, we should interpret in a better sense: indeed regarding ambiguous deeds which can be done with a good or bad mind, it is rash to decide and especially to condemn. For what Augustine says regarding [deeds] which are done, let us understand it in like manner regarding [things] which are said, and thus applying the opinion of Augustine to speculative [opinions], let us conclude that in these sayings which can hold a good or a bad sense, it is rash to decide, especially to condemn.[99]

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[96] *Ibid.*, p. 149: "Et Gregorius 26 libro Moralium [*Moralia in Iob* 16, XXXV]. Non debet aliquis verba considerare, sed voluntatem et intentionem, quia non debet intentio verbis deservire, sed verba intentioni."

[97] *Ibid.*: "Et Hieronymus super epistolam ad Galatas testatur [*Commentarium in Epistolam ad Galatas* I, M 322c], Non in verbis scripturarum esse Evangelium, sed in sensu, non in superficie, sed in medulla, non in sermonum foliis, sed in radice rationis."

[98] *Ibid.*: "Propterea Ocham in dialogo falsificat hanc communem propositionem, verba non ex opinionibus singulorum, sed ex communi usu accipienda sunt, maxime in secunda parte. dicit enim, Quod in verbis ambiguis et multiplicibus, non est recurrendum ad communem intelligentiam, sed potius ad intentionem loquentium, et ita dum est ambiguitas in doctrina alicuius dicentis vel scribentis, similiter recurrendum est ad intentionem dicentis, ut ipse se exponat, et exprimat verum sensum, quem permittat vis verborum."

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 150: "Quod etiam si ante declaratum sensum meum fecissent, licet forsitan excusabilius errassent, tamen quia si vere docti sunt, per se etiam poterant cognoscere, habere propositionem duplicem sensum, quod attendentes non solum simpliciter eam damnare, sed in bonum etiam potius eum sensum interpretari debuissent, nam Augustinus in libro de concordia Evangelistarum illud Matthaei exponens: Nolite iudicare et non iudicabimini: inquit, Hoc loco nihil aliud praecipi existimo, nisi ut ea facta, quae

Pico concludes that the papal commission should have been more sensitive in its interpretation of his condemned thesis and should instead have interpreted it *in bonum etiam potius sensum*—in a good sense. He cites Augustine to show that when we have to interpret deeds where we are not sure whether they happened with a good or bad intention, we should interpret them favourably. Concerning deeds in the middle, i.e., those that could have been done with either good or bad intentions—*temerarium est iudicare maxime ut condemnemus*—it is especially rash to decide that we should condemn them. Pico applies this principle to Augustine's own speculative opinions and, in fact, to all opinions as such. These are Pico's last words concerning this thesis, and it is clear that he wants to emphasize that all our decisions in the realm of theological opinions are provisional and without certainty.

Pico continues this line of thinking in his discussions of the other condemned theses: on the one hand, he insists on the probability of his theses and on the fact that the theses can be defended;[100] and, on the other he criticizes the papal commission.[101] In the beginning of the discussion of the adoration of the cross he clarifies his attitude towards probable truth and towards Thomas:

> That this conclusion which was condemned by them I not only believe is Catholic, but also that it is truer than its contrary which is this: the Cross of Christ and the images should be admired by worship, in this way Thomas posits. For Thomas' opinion on this issue seems to me less reasonable than the opinion of Durandus, Henry of Ghent, Ioannes of

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dubium est quo animo fiant, in meliorem partem interpretemur [*De sermone Domini in monte* II, 59]: de factis enim mediis, quae possunt bono et malo animo fieri, temerarium est iudicare maxime ut condemnemus. Quod ergo de his quae fiunt dicit Augustinus, dictum pariter intelligamus de his quae dicuntur, et ita speculativis applicantes sententiam Augustini, concludamus, Quod in iis dictis, quae possunt habere bonum et malum sensum, temerarium est iudicare, maxime ut condemnemus."

[100] See, e.g., the discussion on the penalty for a mortal sin, where Pico asserts: "Nisi essent dicta sanctorum, quae in manifesto sui sermonis videntur dicere oppositum, firmiter assererem, infrascriptas conclusiones: assero tamen ipsas esse probabiles, et rationabiliter posse defendi" (*Ibid.*, p. 150); "… ideo tam scripto, quam verbo dixi me non asserere istam opinionem, scilicet in tali modo dicendi, propter reverentiam sanctorum, sed dixi eam posse probabiliter defendi" (*Ibid.*, p. 154).

[101] See, e.g., the discussion on the adoration of the cross: "… nam cum ego eis dixerim, me sequi Henricum et Ioannem, et ipsi deinde dicant, me non sequi catholicos doctores, quis ex hoc non inferat, non esse illos, quos dixi me sequi doctores catholicos? Quis autem hoc ferat? Quis aequo animo patiatur? Henricum et Ioannem, tam praeclaros tam excellentes doctores Ecclesiae lumina, fidei propugnacula, pro non catholicis, et consequenter haereticis et infidelibus reprobari" (*Ibid.*, p. 159).

> Gurra, Robert Olchot, Petrus Aquila, and of many others whom I follow in [my] conclusion.[102]

The problem of the adoration of the Cross, and especially of images, is one of the most widely disputed issues in the history of both Eastern and Western Christianity. An analysis of all details in this passage is a task for the future commentator on this work of Pico. What matters to us is that Pico here claims not only that his thesis is Catholic, but also that it is truer than the opposite opinion. His criterion for this is that Thomas' opinion simply seems less reasonable to Pico—*minus enim mihi videtur rationabilis in hoc opinio Thomae*—than that of other Doctors of the Church. In this context, the opinion he supports is more *rationabilis*, and is therefore *verior*. *Ratio* in late scholastic texts can help the theologian to achieve plain *veritas*.[103] But for Pico, even this opinion, which he presents as Catholic, is still not *vera* but only *verior*. Since it is not part of scriptural truth, it could only claim to be more true than the other opinion. One notes that what makes the opinion of the other Doctors closer to the truth than that of Thomas is both that it is more reasonable and that it is Catholic. How does one determine that it is Catholic? We read on:

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[102] *Ibid*., p. 155: "Hanc conclusionem, per istos damnatam, ego non solum credo esse Catholicam, sed etiam veriorem sua opposita, quae est haec: Crux Christi et imagines sunt adorandae, latria, eo modo ponit Thomas. minus enim mihi videtur rationabilis in hoc opinio Thomae, quam sit opinio Durandi et Henrici de Gandauo, Ioannis de Gurra, Robeti Olchot, Petri Aquila et aliorum complurium, quos ego sequor in conclusione." As already mentioned in n. 78 above, Durandus of St. Pourçain was one of the leaders of the Dominican reaction against Thomas; Henry of Ghent who was already mentioned in n. 30 above, was an Augustinian theologian and an opponent of Thomas. He is known as *Doctor solemnis*. Ioannes de Gurra I have not found. Robert Holkot, died 1349, a Dominican, was a professor of theology in Cambridge, and a follower of Ockham. Petrus de Aquila was a Scotist and an inquisitor who died in 1361. It is significant that all the theologians quoted here by Pico are critics and opponents of Thomas Aquinas, and apart from Henry, they all belong to the fourteenth century. Durandus, in the introduction to his commentary on the *Sententiae*, writes: "Modus autem loquendi ac scribendi in ceteris, quae fidem non tangunt, est, ut magis innitamur rationi quam auctoritati cuiuscunque doctoris quantumcunque celebris vel solemnis, et parvipendatur omnis humana auctoritas, quando per rationem elucescit contraria veritas" (Matthias Baumgartner, *Friedirch Ueberwegs Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie der patristischen und scholastichen Zeit* (Berlin 1915), p. 590). The sentence just quoted, and similar expressions in other passages dealing with the *auctoritas* of Doctors, make it more than likely that Pico has this sentence or similar sentences in mind. One notes that for a late scholastic like Durandus, *ratio* helps us to reach a *veritas*. In a more Academic mood, Pico would rather use expressions like *opinio, probabile, veri simile*.

[103] See the sentence quoted from Durandus in the last note.

> O most condemned decision, let them see that they cannot escape from traps since my conclusion denies nothing but Thomas' way, in the way which was expounded above, and then it is clear that my conclusion is not against the custom of the Church.[104]

Pico not only maintains that all theological opinions of the Fathers and Doctors are open to debate, and that all our decisions in the realm of theological opinions are without certainty, but he also opposes Thomas—one of the two most important Doctors in contemporary scholasticism—and prefers other, less esteemed, Doctors. Pico's analysis does not leave room for the *auctoritas* of Fathers and Doctors so common in scholastic theology. These opinions are of equal authority, and we should decide, without certainty, which of them is more probable in each case. The *modus Thomae*, which should be regarded as only *probabilis veritas*, cannot be identified with *consuetudo Ecclesiae*, which in itself is still not *infallibilis veritas*. The combination between *rationabilitas* and *consuetudo Ecclesiae* would render the opinion of the other Doctors *verior*, but we are still in the realm of *opiniones*.

A case study for the distinction between faith and opinions, or between revealed knowledge and natural knowledge, is shown in the discussion of *magia naturalis et cabala*. Pico's condemned conclusion was that no other science assures us more about Christ's divinity than *magia* and *cabala*.[105] In his explanation Pico argues:

> I introduced this conclusion by declaring that among sciences which are sciences in such a way that they do not rest upon revealed things either in the way [they] proceed or in their principles or in their conclusions, there is no other science which certifies for us more in that way which sciences humanly invented can certify regarding this than that Magia, concerning which my conclusions posit there, that it is part of natural science: and that part—Cabala—which is science, and is not revealed theology.[106]

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[104] *Apologia*, p. 159: "… o damnatissimum iudicium, videant ut laqueos effugere non possunt, aut enim conclusio mea, non negat nisi modum Thomae, modo supra exposito, et tunc patet conclusionem meam non esse contra consuetudinem Ecclesiae…"

[105] *Ibid.*, p. 166: "Nulla est scientia, quae nos magis certificet de divinitate Christi, quam Magia et Cabala."

[106] *Ibid.*, pp. 166–167: "Hanc conclusionem ego declarando dixi, quod inter scientias, quae ita sunt scientiae, quae neque ex modo procedendi, neque ex suis principiis, neque ex suis conclusionibus: innituntur revelatis, nulla est, quae nos magis certificet eo modo, quo de hoc certificare possunt, scientiae humanitus inventae, quam Magia illa, de qua ibi ponunt conclusiones, quae est pars scientiae naturalis: et pars illa Cabala, quae est scientia, et non est Theologia revelata."

Pico explains that when he uses the term *scientia*—knowledge—to describe *magia* and *cabala*, he means knowledge that does not at any stage rest on revelation, but only on *scientia humanitus inventa*—knowledge discovered by human beings. He says that both *magia* and *cabala* are part of natural knowledge, not part of revealed theology. This is important for him, and he repeats the same claim on the next page.[107] What does Pico mean by the words: *non accipio in conclusione scientiam generaliter*? Thomas had clearly distinguished between an object of pure faith and an object of knowledge for some, and faith for others.[108] Pico had to clarify this point because it seems that the *magistri* who condemned his thesis had forgotten this distinction and were thinking in terms of *scientia generaliter*, without taking into account this important distinction. How, then, can such knowledge be useful for things which are connected to faith?

> By such Magia and Cabala we are being helped regarding the knowing of Christ's divinity.[109]

Those sciences help us to recognize the divinity of Christ, which is worth knowing. Those sciences are completely part of human knowledge, and yet can help us understand Christ's divinity. It does not mean that we can comprehend Christ's divinity in itself by using those sciences. They are simply human tools for human purposes.[110] Pico presents a systematic discussion of those two sciences: he distinguishes between natural and demonic magic and claims that the Doctors prohibited only the latter.[111] In his discussion of *cabala* Pico argues that it

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[107] *Ibid.*, p. 168: "… per hanc conclusionem non intendo comparare Magiam et Cabalam ad scientias revelatas, quia non accipio in conclusione scientiam generaliter, sed pro scientia, quae neque ex modo procedendi, neque ex suis principiis, neque ex conclusionibus innititur revelationi."

[108] See, e.g., in the *Summa theologiae* 2a2ae, q. 1, a. 5: "Et similiter potest contingere ut id quod est visum vel scitum ab uno homine, etiam in statu viae, sit ab alio creditum, qui hoc demonstrative non novit. Id tamen quod communiter omnibus hominibus proponitur ut credendum est communiter non scitum. Et ista sunt quae simpliciter fidei subsunt. Et ideo fides et scientia non sunt de eodem." Such seperation is of course based on *Ad Heb.*, 11, 1: Ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων.

[109] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 168: "… per talem Magiam et Cabalam, adiuvari nos in cognoscenda divinitate Christi."

[110] On the analogy of Thomas' use of metaphysical proofs for the existence of God, one may guess that Pico implies here something similar. Magic and Cabala may help us to establish, in the human sphere, *that* Christ was divine; but the nature of his divinity is part of the mystery of the Trinity which we only know by faith.

[111] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 171: "… quod si quando legunt apud doctores, omnem Magiam

seems that *isti magistri* understand no more about these things than what is understood by learned men concerning uncultivated and unpolished matters, and he gives some interesting examples.[112] After introducing the idea of *cabala*,[113] he claims that in these texts there are many things which are *consona fidei nostrae*.[114] This is again enough for Pico: to show that *cabala* is in accordance with the Christian faith. As we have already seen, such accord or harmony should be the criterion for *probabilis veritas* or human knowledge. Pico is very proud to be the first person to introduce this science to Latin readers.[115]

Pico's frequent use of the terms *probabile* and *possibile* in every chapter of the *Apologia* is remarkable. In his discussion of the sacrament of Eucharist, for instance, right at the beginning he emphasizes that his conclusion[116] is about what is possible and not about what really is: *loquendo de possibili non de sic esse*.[117] He repeats again and again that his conclusion concerning this issue is merely possible.[118] On the next page we find again the claim that the opinions of the Doctors should be regarded as being about what is possible rather than about what really

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esse prohibitam, statim utique ex causis prohibitionis intelligent ipsos, de ea solum loqui, quae habet commertium cum daemonibus, et de naturali nihil eos intendere."

[112] *Ibid.*, p. 175: "Volo autem et aliquid dicere latius de ista Cabala, quanquam et supra, in prima parte Apologiae nostrae multa dixerimus. sed illa forte non magis ab istis Magistris intelligentur, quam intelligantur barbara ab eruditis. quare et hic aliquid secum hoc, Parisiensi stylo, dicemus de ista Cabala: horrendum enim istis patribus videtur hoc nomen, et ex ipso pene sono timendum, ita ut forte ex ipsis, cui cabalistas non homines, sed hircocervos potius vel centaurum, vel omnino monstruosum aliquid esse suspicentur. quinimo audi rem ridiculam, cum semel quidam ex eis interrogaretur, quid esset ista Cabala? Respondit ille, fuisse perfidum quendam hominem et diabolicum, qui dictus est Cabala."

[113] *Ibid.*, pp. 175–176.

[114] *Ibid.*, p. 176: "Fuerunt autem postea haec mysteria literis mandata, tempore et causa infradicendis, et illi libri dicti sunt libri Cabalae, in quibus libris, multa imo pene omnia inveniuntur consona fidei nostrae."

[115] *Ibid.*, p. 180: "Haec est prima et vera Cabala, de qua credo me primum apud Latinos explicitam fecisse mentionem…"

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 181: "Dico quod sine conversione substantiae panis in corpus Christi, vel paneitatis annihilatione, fieri potest, ut in altari sit corpus Christi secundum veritatem sacramenti…"

[117] *Ibid.*

[118] *Ibid.*, p. 182: "… sed tamen possibile est, quod in altari esset simul cum pane, si esset assumptus a Christo. Loquor igitur in praesenti conclusione, De sacramento *possibili* et *possibili* eius veritate, et *possibili* praesentia corporis Christi, simul cum isto pane assumptibili, Ideo miror, quae damnata sit praesens conclusio pro erronea, ex eo quae praedicta sint falsa de sacramento Eucharistiae iam instituto, de quo dicunt me loqui, cum tamen de *possibili* sacramento, et *possibili* eius veritate expresse loqui profitear in conclusione."

is the case.[119] Pico is using here both the known scholastic terminology of the theoretical theological disputes (discussing what is only possible), and the less-known Academic terminology (emphasizing the realm of what is only probable and thus delaying the final judgment regarding the truth). Pico is adding here something about our mental capacity:

> Secondly it is asserted, because since according to Augustine's [epistle] to Volusianus regarding wondrous things the entire reason of the act would be the power of the one who acts, thus to limit this wondrous sacrament to a determined way of defence which is not expressly said in the canon of Scripture nor in the determination of the Church, is to limit the divine power to the capacity of our intellect: such a thing is dangerous and against Augustine who said this in the same place. If the reason is investigated it will not be a wondrous thing: if example is posited, it will not be singular: let us grant that God can [do] something which we admit that we are unable to investigate.[120]

Like the way of descending in the discussion of Christ's descent into hell, the way in which Christ's body can be on the altar during the ceremony (whether it should be understood as an act of *conversio* or *adsumptio*) is a matter of theological speculations without necessity. Both are mysterious acts in which the believer is obliged to believe; but the mode of defending and explaining them is only *possibile* or *probabile*, since it is not set out in the Scriptures or in the Church's determinations. But here Pico also emphasizes something else: our limited human intellects vs the reason behind the mysterious act. Divine power, which is the reason behind the mysterious act, cannot be limited by a human mode of understanding. This cause or reason cannot be an object for our investigations. The object of our investigations is thus the different ways of interpreting articles of faith—interpretations that are possible or probable theological opinions. The nucleus of the articles, the mysteries,

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[119] *Ibid.*, p. 183: "Quod ergo isti doctores dicere videntur, de sic esse, multo magis potest teneri de possibili."

[120] *Ibid.*: "Secundo arguitur, quia cum secundum Augustinum ad Volusianum, in rebus mirabilibus, tota ratio facti, sit potentia facientis, sic artare hoc mirabile sacramentum, ad determinatum defensionis modum, qui ex canone scripturae aut Ecclesiae determinatione non habeatur expressus, est divinam potentiam artare, ad intellectus nostri capacitatem: quod est periculosum, et contra Augustinum ibidem dicentem hoc. Si ratio quaeritur, non erit mirabile: si exemplum ponitur, non erit singulare: demus Deum aliquid posse, quod nos fateamur investigare non posse…" See Augustine, *Epistola* 137, 2. 8: "Hic si ratio quaeritur, non erit mirabile: si exemplum poscitur non erit singulare. Demus Deum aliquid posse, quod nos fateamur investigari non posse. In talibus rebus tota ratio facti est potentia facientis." As usual what Pico gives is partly a paraphrase and partly a quotation.

are beyond our power to understand. After all, man is not omniscient; he has a weak intellect, and in the gradations of intellectual natures he is the lowliest. A sign of this, as Pico tells us, is that man cannot always be convinced of falsity with evident reasons.[121] It seems that Pico is describing another aspect of the *magnum miraculum*. But man still has some instruments to deal with different opinions:

> Because since it is said, "This is my body." A body cannot be held there as something substituted for it which has bodily qualities, but more as nature which is held, as is shown in the possessive pronoun which has been added to it, when it is said, "*my* body": this is what I hold. But perhaps this [argument] would have more efficacy among philologists than among theologians.[122]

We have here two professional identities: the man of letters (*grammaticus*) and the man of the schools (*theologus*). Pico himself represents a third identity: a combination of those two identities. While the *grammaticus* and the *theologus* are established identities, and we should think, for instance, of Salutati, Bruni and Poliziano, on the one hand, and of Dominici, Antoninus and Caroli, on the other, the combination of the two is not yet an established identity. In other words, Pico is constituting here a new professional identity: the identity of a humanist theologian.[123] He uses grammatical arguments (*ut notat pronomen posses-*

[121] *Ibid.*, p. 193: "Non enim de facili semper falsum, de sua falsitate, per evidentes rationes convincitur, ita est debile lumen nostri intellectus, utpote eius, qui ultimus est in natura intellectuali."

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 195: "quia cum dicitur, Hoc est corpus meum. corpus non potest ibi teneri pro supposito habente corporeitatem, sed potius pro natura habita, ut notat pronomen possessivum, cui additur cum dicitur, Corpus meum: hoc est, quod habeo. sed forte hoc haberet maiorem efficaciam apud Grammaticos quam apud theologos."

[123] Such an identity was already a central part of Valla's intellectual activity, as shown in many of Camporeale's publications. See e.g., 'Umanesimo e Teologia tra '400 e '500', in *Memorie Domenicane* 8–9 (1977–1978), pp. 411–436; especially p. 422: "Fu precisamente nel campo dell'esegesi scritturistica, che il Valla mise in atto la trasposizione più originale della strumentazione filologica dalle *humanae litterae* alle *theologicae litterae*. Con il passaggio dalla filologia classica alla filologia biblica, il Valla operò la svolta 'umanistica' della ricerca teologica, che sarà determinante nel cristianesimo del sec. XV e XVI. Poiché la Sacra Scrittura costituiva la fonte primaria e il fondamento linguistico della riflessione teologica, il testo sacro, pur secondo criteri *sui generis*, rientrava nell'ambito della retorica quale 'scienza del linguaggio'. Ancora: poiché la tradizione storico-linguistica del testo biblico si estendeva dall'originale greco alla versione latina della *Vulgata*, era tra questi due poli che doveva dispiegarsi, sempre secondo criteri *sui generis* derivanti dall'oggetto specifico, la 'critica filologica' dell'umanista." On the relation between the status of the studies of Latin grammar, imitation of classical poetry, and the emergence of the humanist movement in Italy see Witt, '*In the Footsteps of the Ancients*'… especially the first two chapters.

sivum, cui additur cum dicitur, Corpus meum) in order to enforce his opinion (*hoc est, quod habeo*) that Christ's body is held in the ceremony *pro natura habita*, and not *pro supposito habente corporeitatem*. He is aware of the fact that such argumentation would be more effective among *grammatici* than among *theologi*; but he himself does not represent either *grammatici* or *theologi*. It is important to notice that once again Pico does not try to prove or demonstrate his opinion. His reference to his argument being more effective with grammarians than with theologians may even be sarcastic. At the end of this discussion, after emphasizing again that his conclusion is only about what is possible and not about what really is,[124] he clearly argues against a strictly literal theological interpretation of *panis est corpus Christi*, and here he chooses not a grammatical interpretation but rather a more logical one. Thus one can be more theological than grammatical when the context demands.[125]

In the beginning of his discussion of the salvation of Origen Pico mentions the controversy between Rufinus and Jerome over whether or not Origen's books had been corrupted by heretics. Pico asks *quid utraque opinio habet probabilitatis*—how much probability each of the two opinions which he quotes has. Pico himself prefers to think that the heretical opinions are not Origen's (i.e. that they were inserted by heretics), and he relies *pro hac parte* on the authority of Pamphilus the Martyr, not using any other proof or demonstration.[126] It seems,

[124] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 198: "Quae verba efficacissima sunt pro veritate conclusionis meae, quae tota est de possibili, non de sic esse etc."

[125] *Ibid.*: "Cum autem dicitur, quod ista, videlicet panis est corpus Christi: corpus Christi est panis: non possunt verificari, nisi panis maneret, dicendum, quod exponendum est, id est, ubi erat panis, ibi sit corpus Christi." From the strict grammatical point of view, *panis est corpus Christi* means that the bread and the body of Christ are present at the same time. But what is more likely (Pico is arguing *de possibili*) is that whatever kind of transubstantiation has taken place, the bread is no longer here, but has become the body of Christ. This means that the more literal reading of *est* should be interpreted as *erat*.

[126] *Ibid.*, p. 199: "Opinatur Rufinus haeretica dogmata, quae in libris Origenis inveniuntur, ab haereticis falsa fuisse inserta, qui illius depraverunt libros, et ex Origenis mente non esse. Hieronymus [*Adversus Pelagianos*, *Prologus* M 497b] contra sentit. Sed videamus, quid utraque opinio habet probabilitatis, et apparebit forte, quod salva fide et plenaria satisfactione eorum omnium, quae de necessitate salutis tenemur credere, adhuc libere et probabiliter potest credi, quae principales illae haereses, ex quibus peccatum convincit Origenis, et consequenter damnatio, non fuerint ex Origenis mente, sed ei falso a perfidis haereticis illius libros depravantibus impositae. Est autem pro hac parte, primo authoritas Pamphili martyris, cuius liber fertur in defensionem Origenis, in quo gloriosissimus Martyr, ex verbis ipsius Origenis, ex eius libris ibi recitatis, ostendit ipsum Catholice sensisse, in his in quibus haereticus accusatur." The other argu-

Pico argues, that Jerome himself *utrumque ponat probabile*—regarded both opinions as probable—thus indicating that Rufinus, who argued for Origen's orthodoxy, cannot be convinced that Origen's books were uncorrupted by the heretics, and that he himself (Jerome, who argued against Origen's orthodoxy) cannot be convinced that that book (in support of Origen's orthodoxy) is really by Pamphilus.[127] It is important to note that in Pico's Latin text (as shown in n. 127) the term *probabile* is used in conjunction with the verb *convincere*. We are once again in the realm of persuasion, and the connection between *probabile* and persuasion is one of the common ideas of the skeptical Academy. Another term is connected to this realm of persuasion: *veri simile*. Pico uses the

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ments Pico adduces in support of his view are not appeals to authority but detailed discussions of various sources like Jerome and Eusebius and their credibility. See Jerome, *Epistola* 84 (anno 386), 10–11; *Apologia adversus libros Rufini* II, 15–19. On the controversy between Pico and Pietro Garsia regarding Origen see Henri Crouzel, *Une controverse sur Origène à la renaissance: Jean Pic de la Mirandole et Pierre Garsia* (Paris 1977). On the controversy in antiquity see Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton 1992), especially pp. 121–151 (Jerome's arguments) and pp. 159–193 (Rufinus' arguments). Jerome and Rufinus are regarded as the two authors who argued for and against Origen's orthodoxy, but this controversy started already at the end of the third century and the beginning of the fourth, with the attack of Methodius, which was reflected in the work of his contemporary, Eustathius of Antioch. At the same time, Pamphilus and Eusebius of Caesarea, who had access to Origen's library, were his defenders. Pamphilus began an *Apology for Origen*, part of which survives in a translation by Rufinus. Eusebius completed that work and made Origen the hero of his *Ecclesiastical History*. For most of the fourth century Origen was respected. In the last decade of the fourth century Epiphanius of Salamis launched what has come to be known as the First Origenist Controversy, attacking Origen as the source of the hated Arian heresy as well as a holder of heretical views on creation and eschatology. This was the controversy in which Jerome and Rufinus became, for Latin Christianity, the spokesmen of opposing sides. In their quarrel over the translation of *Peri Archon*, Jerome accused Rufinus, with justification, of deliberately softening expressions offensive to contemporary standards of orthodoxy (even though he, Jerome, just as deliberately sharpened them). This controversy permanently damaged Origen's reputation. See Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (London 1998), pp. 64–65.

[127] *Ibid.*, p. 200: "Ex quibus verbis videtur, quasi satis notari posse, quod Hieronymus utrumque ponat probabile, innuens sicut convinci non potest Ruffinus, quod illi libri non fuerint corrupti, ita nec ipse potest convinci, quod ille liber sit Pamphili…" On the *in utramque partem* formula as characteristic of the skeptical Academy, with references to Cicero, see John Glucker, 'Theophrastus, the Academy, and the Athenian Philosophical Atmosphere', in Johannes M. van Ophuijsen and Marlein Van Raalte [eds.], *Theophrastus. Reappraising the Sources* (New Brunswick and London 1998), pp. 299–316; especially pp. 315–316. See also n. 167 below. The claim that Origen's works were interpolated by heretics was Rufinus' way to solve the problem of contradictions and unorthodox interpretations in Origen. See Clark, *The Origenist Controversy*… pp. 163–164.

term three times in this discussion.[128] Persuasion is, of course, one of the aims of rhetoric. But the terms *probabile* and *veri simile* were used not only by rhetoricians; they were used also by philosophers belonging to the tradition of Academic skepticism,[129] a point which I shall return to later.

The discussion of the salvation of Origen gave Pico an excellent opportunity to return to an old problem—how to determine which opinions were heretical:

> Wherefore perhaps one should beware lest, while wanting to make Origen entirely a heretic, we would turn the Apostles and their disciples into heretics [too]. For since in their books there are to be found heresies which are not less worth detesting and execrating and not less impious doctrines than in Origen's books, I do not see why they, too, in the like manner could not be accused or in the like manner be excused.[130]

Here, too, Pico wants to distinguish between heresy, opinions which are merely wrong, and statements made innocently and incautiously.[131] Since opinions are only probable, they cannot be used as arguments for determining heresy. Pico, while examining Origen's opinion concerning the soul, emphasizes the historical and thus changeable nature of theological opinions which are not based on the Scriptures or on the Church's decrees.[132] He argues that in Origen's day, and even in

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[128] *Ibid.*, p. 203: "Si lectum o Hieronyme Pamphili librum, Pamphili esse aliquando et credidisti et scripsisti, dic quaeso, quae in eo legebas mendaciane, et haereses, aut haeresum favores esse cognoscebas? An potius vera vel verisimilia, et catholicam fidem nihil laedentia?"; *Ibid.*, p. 206: "Tertium, quod verisimile facit, libros Origenis fuisse corruptos est"; *Ibid.*, p. 221: "Et hoc ego intellexi in brevi responsione mea, cum alias dixi, ex quo non invenitur fuisse pertinax, verisimile est credere, quod Deus eum salvaverit…"

[129] See John Glucker, '*Probabile*, *Veri Simile*, and Related Terms', in J.G.F. Powell [ed.], *Cicero The Philosopher* (Oxford 1995), pp. 115–143.

[130] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 204: "quare forte cavendum est, ne dum haereticum omnino facere volumus Origenem, haereticos Apostolos, haereticosque apostolorum discipulos esse faciamus. nam cum nihil minus detestandae et execrandae haereses, non minus impia dogmata, in illorum inveniantur libris, quam in libris Origenis, non video, cur non vel similiter accusentur, vel excusentur similiter."

[131] *Ibid.*, p. 205: "Praeterea sicut fieri potuit, secundum te [here Pico is imagining what Rufinus might have responded to Jerome—'sic forte responderet Rufinus…'], ut illi vel simpliciter erraverint, vel alio sensu scripserint, vel innocenter et minus caute loquuti sint: cur non fieri potuit similiter ut Origenes vel simpliciter erraverit, vel alio sensu scripserit (ut contendit Didymus) vel innocenter et minus caute loquutus sit quaedam, quae non possunt perversorum hominum calumniam declinare?"

[132] In this context, *decreta* has, of course, the institutional meaning which it acquired in the Catholic Church. It is, however, tempting to think that Pico, who was familiar

that of Augustine, nothing was decided by the Church concerning the soul.[133] This is why *ipse Augustinus dubius erat in opinione de anima*.[134] And this is why Origen's wrong opinion concerning the soul cannot be used as evidence of heresy.[135] The comparison between Origen and Augustine is part of a critical discussion in which Pico asks why Augustine was excused, while Origen (just like Pico) was suspected of heresy, and raises the larger question of what should be considered heretical:

> For the second article it seems more reasonable thus that Origen should be excused because if what he wrote would not be accepted by Catholics, [yet] in writing this thing, he does not proceed dogmatically or positively but always doubtfully and interrogatively. Wherefore as, although in Augustine's books on *Genesis* there are many things which are not accepted, still for this reason he was excused by us, since as he himself says in the book of *Retractations*, there are more things in this book which are searched than discovered: thus also can many things in Origen's books be worthy of rejection and condemnation, things which since he himself has not said by determining but [only] by inquiring, he therefore does not deserve to be called a heretic, since heresy properly describes affirmed dogma, against either clear truth of Scripture or the Church's determination. But that Origen always spoke thus is clear from many places. For even after the disputation on the soul he says: these things according to our opinion are not dogmas, but only examined and extended things, in order that they would not seem completely unexplored.[136]

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with Cicero's *Academica*, may well also have had in mind passages like *Lucullus* 27 and 29, where it emerges that *decretum* is Cicero's translation of δόγμα in its philosophical connotation.

[133] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 210: "quia Origenes, non omnia tenebatur suo tempore explicite de anima credere, quae nos nunc tenemur, quia nec in scriptura habebantur manifesta, nec per Ecclesiam ut postea fuit, tunc fuerat determinatum. imo non solum tempore Origenis, sed etiam tempore Augustini, qui per 200 annos post Origenem adhuc fuerat, per catholicos, id est per universalem ecclesiam de anima aliquid determinatum."

[134] *Ibid.*

[135] *Ibid.*, p. 211: "Ex quo patet evidenter, propter erroneam opinionem de anima praedictam, haereticum nullo modo posse dici Origenem."

[136] *Ibid.*, p. 212: "Pro secundo articulo videtur rationabilius ideo excusandus Origenes, quod si quid scripsit, quod a catholicis non acceptetur, in illis scribendis, neque dogmatice neque assertive, sed dubitative semper, et inquisitive procedit. quare sicut licet in Augustini libris, super Genesim [*De Genesi ad litteram* X, 3.6], multa sint quae non acceptantur, tamen propterea excusantur a nobis, quod ut ipsemet dicit in libro Retractationum [*Retractationes* I, 18], plura in eo libro sunt quaesita quam inventa: ita et multa esse possunt, in libris Origenis reprobanda et damnanda, quae quia ipse non determinando, sed inquirendo dixit, non propterea haereticus est dicendus, quando haeresis assertum proprie dicit dogma, contra expressam vel scripturae veritatem vel ecclesiae

Origen should be excused because if what he wrote was not acceptable to Catholics, in writing these things *neque dogmatice neque assertive, sed dubitative semper, et inquisitive procedit.* Augustine, who wrote many unacceptable things in his book on *Genesis*, was excused because he said that they were *plura…quaesita quam inventa.* Why, then, even though Origen said that he was not deciding but only inquiring into these things, and that his views concerning the soul were not dogmas, but only *quaesita atque proiecta*, is he still suspected of being a heretic? For someone with an undefiled will to ask questions as part of a theological investigation and even to hold wrong opinions on subjects which were not yet decided by the Church does not constitute heresy.[137] But what then is heresy? First of all, Pico argues, it is a historically conditioned question:

> It is possible that to believe in a certain opinion in one period would be [considered] a mortal sin, [and] it would not be so in another period: and this is because someone can believe without obstinancy in anything in one period, which in another period he would not believe without obstinancy, as for example, after the Church's decision or the elucidating of Sacred Scripture.[138]

This is a rare but extremely important passage. Here Pico makes it clear that, apart from various other reasons, the opinions of various authors can become a matter of faith or heresy if the Church has decided on this issue after the opinion was expressed. It follows that, as long as there is no binding decision of the Church, an opinion

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determinationem. Quod autem sic semper locutus sit Origenes, ex multis patet locis. Nam et post disputationem de anima inquit: Haec iuxta nostram sententiam non sint dogmata, sed quaesita tantum atque proiecta, ne penitus intractata viderentur."

[137] *Ibid.*, pp. 212–213: "… quod si sit aliquis habens erroneam opinionem de rebus fidei, adhuc per ecclesiam non determinatis, *modo in voluntate eius nulla sit macula*, sed firmum propositum, de illis credere semper consonae scripturae et Ecclesiae, ille nec peccat mortaliter, nec haereticus proprie est dicendus." Emphasis mine. I shall deal with the issue of *voluntas* on the following pages.

[138] *Ibid.*, p. 213: "… possibile esse, quod opinari aliquam opinionem, aliquo tempore sit peccatum mortale, quod non erit alio tempore: et hoc est, quia potest quis sine pertinacia credere aliquid uno tempore, quod alio tempore non crederet sine pertinacia, ut puta, post determinationem Ecclesiae, aut sacrae scripturae dilucidationem." In the passage quoted in n. 133 it is clear that *determinatio Ecclesiae* refers to the decision of a council which was taken before Origen expressed his opinion. In this passage, which is formulated as a general rule, *determinatio Ecclesiae* may mean the decision taken in later councils, even after the Creed had been established. Pico does not make his opinion as to the authority of later councils quite clear; but in a number of places he does give a special status to the first four councils and the Creed. This is what may also be implied in our passage. Although it is formulated in a 'timeless present' it is likely that it applies only to Origen's age.

remains an opinion. We remember that for Pico only decisions of the first Ecumenical Councils are binding.

But Pico is concerned in this context mainly with heresies. He now connects heresy, in the best scholastic tradition, to the will rather than the intellect; but one notices that the examples of retractations he gives are all from the early patristic period:

> That not absolutely an error of the intellect makes man heretical but it is necessary that malice and perversity would be in the will. Therefore Augustine said: I can make an error [but] I cannot be a heretic. This is confirmed by decision of the universal Church which canonized many who yet until [their] death persisted in [holding] wrong opinions in matters of faith and thereafter [those wrong opinions] were condemned as heretical by the Church, yet nowhere does one read that these opinions were rectracted by those [many who held wrong opinions]. Such were Papias the bishop of Hieropolis, Victorinus of Pictava, Hiereneus of Lugdunum, the blessed Cyprianus, and many others who, we know, made a mistake in faith, and that their opinions were condemned as heretical, and still they are included in the canon of saints, whence it follows that it is necessary to say that either even they who died [believing] in those wrong opinions in faith, yet did not die in mortal sin; or that the Church had made a mistake in their canonization, since if they would say (as someone among those who opposed me said) responding that they perhaps had been wrongly canonized: then it is not I any longer but rather they whose opinions are contrary to the decision of the universal Church.[139]

[139] *Ibid.*: "… Quod non praecise error intellectus, facit hominem haereticum, sed oportet quod sit malicia et perversitas in voluntate. Ideo dicebat Augustinus [the closest I can find in Augustine is *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali* 2, 23, 26: "… nunc vero quoniam baptizandos fatetur, etiamsi causam baptismatis eorum non eam dicat quam veritas habet, sed quae ad fidem non pertinet; non se arbitratur errare, et ideo non esse haereticum iudicandum." The formulation given here is probably a later version]: Errare possum haereticus esse non possum. Confirmatur hoc ex determinatione universalis Ecclesiae, quae multos canonizavit, qui tamen usque ad mortem perseveraverunt in erroneis opinionibus de fide, et deinde per ecclesiam pro haereticis reprobatis, quas opiniones nusquam legitur ab illis fuisse retractatas. Tales fuerunt Papias Episcopus Hieropolitanus, Victorinus Pictavensis, Hireneus Lugdunensis, beatus Cyprianus, et multi alii, quos scimus errasse in fide, et eorum opiniones pro haereticis condemnatas, et tamen ipsi habentur in canone sanctorum, ex quo sequitur, ut necessario dicendum sit, quod vel illi etiam, quod decesserint in illis opinionibus erroneis in fide, non tamen decesserint in peccato mortali. vel quod ecclesia erraverit in eorum canonizatione, quod si dixerint (ut etiam dixit quidam ex his qui me impugnabant) respondens, Quod illi forte non erant bene canonizati: iam non ego, sed ipsi sentiunt contra determinationem universalis Ecclesiae." Compare Giovanfrancesco's words on Pico in *Opera omnia*… p. 3^{v}: "… quasi illud Augustini proferret: Errare possum, haereticus esse non possum, quando alterum sit hominis proprium, alterum perversae et obstinatae voluntatis." Papias is one of the Apostolic Fathers, fragments of whose work have sur-

A heretic, then, is not someone who has erred in his intellect, but rather someone who has had malice and perversity in his will, claims Pico, citing Augustine: *Errare possum haereticus esse non possum*. To make a mistake is one thing and to be heretic is another altogether. This is confirmed by a universal decision of the Church, the authority which canonized many who held wrong opinions in matters of faith until their death. These heretical opinions were condemned by the Church; yet those who held such opinions—and Pico gives some examples—were canonized. From this he concludes that either those who held such opinions did not commit a mortal sin, and thus the holding of such opinions does not constitute a mortal sin, or that the Church was mistaken in its decision to canonize them. The second option is obviously *contra determinationem universalis Ecclesiae*. The first option distinguishes between *opinio* and *fides*. Faith is connected to the will, and thus:

> For even if it is considered that Origen held many and multiple opinions which were wrong according to the faith, this briefly [should be considered, that] if there was no stain on his will, there is no way that there could be an argument that his soul was condemned.[140]

Heresy and mortal sin are thus connected not to *debilitas et defectus intellectus* but rather to *perversitas, negligentia, pertinacia, quaecumque alia malicia in voluntate*.[141] Those who think that Origen's soul was condemned and that Pico's conclusion on this issue is also worth condemnation must prove such malice and perversity in his will.[142] The issue of whether or

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vived; Victorinus of Petavia, today Pettau in Germany, died 304, was the first commentator on the Bible in Latin. Some of his works have survived; St Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, a Greek pupil of St Polycarp of Smyrna, was one of the greatest Fathers of the Western Church; St Cyprian (c. 200–258), was bishop of Carthage and the most prominent leader of Catholic Christianity in North Africa before Augustine.

[140] *Ibid*.: "… Quod dato etiam, quod Origenes multas et plurimas habuerit opiniones erroneas in fide, hoc praecise, si in voluntate eius nulla fuit macula, aliquo modo non potest esse argumentum, quod anima eius sit damnata."

[141] *Ibid*., p. 214.

[142] Thomas also emphasizes that the heretic is someone who obstinately does not believe in an article of faith. But if someone simply does not believe, without obstinacy, he should be regarded merely as mistaken. See *Summa theologiae* 2a2ae, q. 5, a. 3: "Et sic manifestum est quod haereticus qui pertinaciter discredit unum articulum non est paratus sequi in omnibus doctrinam Ecclesiae (si enim non pertinaciter, iam non est haereticus, sed solum errans)."

In itself, *pertinacia* need not necessarely imply the will; but we have just seen that Pico himself takes *pertinacia* as a species of *malicia in voluntate*, and it is reasonable to assume that this is how he also understood such passages in Thomas.

not Origen and others were saved was a vast labyrinth, Pico argues; and given that these things are not known without proof and have not been made certain by the Church, they should be left entirely to God.[143] In fact, Rufinus, Pamphilus, Eusebius and Jerome all thought that it was more reasonable to believe that Origen was saved than to believe that he was damned.[144] But Pico is asking a more general question: how can we be sure that someone was condemned to hell?

> Regarding the fifth article I say that this proposition—however much someone would commit a grave mortal sin in life, and it is agreed that he himself had commited a mortal sin, unless it were agreed regarding his final impenitence, it is rash to argue that he was in fact damned.[145]

But we cannot be certain either of the condemnation of someone or of his final impenitence without a special revelation from God, claims Pico.[146] This is why we can apply the first two verses in Psalms to Origen.[147] Since no one can know for certain without receiving a supernatural revelation on this matter, it is more resonable to believe that Origen was saved on account of his actions and his way of life.[148] And what about a decision of the Church concerning this issue? In doubtful matters such as this, which cannot be decided with certainty, but only rashly, we do not have to believe that a decision was made by

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[143] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 216: "Grandis labyrinthus a diversis texitur de Sansone, Salamone, Traiano, et isto Origene: an videlicet salvati sint an non? Quae quia sine periculo nesciuntur, nec etiam Ecclesia certificata est de his, domino totaliter committenda sunt." Samson and Solomon had their shortcomings, but at least they belong to the People of God. I do not know what Trajan is doing here.

[144] *Ibid.*, p. 218: "… ut non solum secundum Rufinum, Pamphilum, et Eusebium, sed etiam secundum Hieronymum rationabilius sit credere, ipsum esse salvum, quam credere ipsum esse damnatum."

[145] *Ibid.*: "Pro quinto articulo dico, hanc propositionem, quantumcunque aliquis graviter in vita mortaliter peccet, et constet ipsum mortaliter peccasse, nisi constet de eius finali impoenitentia, temerarium est, vere asserere ipsum esse damnatum."

[146] *Ibid.*, p. 219: "Nemo potest esse certus, quod aliquis sit damnatus ad infernum, nisi hoc habeat ex speciali revelatione Dei, vel ab his quibus creditur Deus revelasse"; "… tamen cum incerti sumus de eius finali impoenitentia, vel poenitentia, asserere ipsum esse damnatum, temerarium est omnino iudicium, et reiiciendum."

[147] *Ibid.*, p. 221: "… dicentes cum David [Ps 1, 1–2], beatus Origenes, qui et aliquando in concilio errantium abiit, in via tamen peccatorum, per impoenitentiam non stetit, et in cathedra pestilentiae, per pertinaciam nunquam sedit: sed in lege domini fuit voluntas eius, et in lege eius meditatus est die ac nocte." The reading *in concilio errantium* is in neither version in the Vulgate. Pico is probably quoting from memory.

[148] *Ibid.*: "quod utrum fuerit an non fuerit, scire certitudinaliter nemo potest, nisi fuerit ei desuper revelatum: sed ita fuisse potius, quam non fuisse credere, consideranti acta et vitam Origenis, magis consonum videtur, et sic rationabilius. nam et rationabiliter in dubiis, favorabiliori parti semper est adhaerendum."

the Church.[149] In fact, not even the Church could be certain regarding this without a special revelation from God.[150] The lack of such a special revelation, and Pico's demand for it as the only criterion to determine whether Origen was saved or condemned, is a crucial argument against the Church, as represented by the papal commission, and against scholastic theology. Pico's demand limits the authority of the Church, which cannot decide on its own with certainty about this matter. The condemnation both of Origen and of Pico's thesis is thus another expression of what Pico regards as a theological problem, in which the Church is trying to usurp authority which rightly belongs to God alone:

> Because to condemn or to save men's souls does not belong to [the authority of] the Church, since [such authority] belongs solely to Him who is the judge of the quick and the dead. Wherefore it is ridiculous if it is read in the decrees.[151]

Since decisions concerning the condemnation or salvation of human souls do not belong to the Church, but solely to God, it would be ridiculous to read such a decision in the Church's decrees. Theologians condemn doctrines, not souls; and even when they use the verb *damnare*, it always refers only to doctrines.[152] By such argumentation Pico distinguishes between the Church's realm (condemnation of a doctrine) and God's realm (condemnation of a soul), or between theological opinions and faith:

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[149] *Ibid.*: "… de illo cuius altera vel altera pars, determinari certitudinaliter nisi temerarie non potest, non debet credi factam esse determinationem ab Ecclesia. Sed de hoc quaesito, utrum Origenes salvus sit, an damnatus? determinari altera pars, nisi temere non potest, saltem absque revelatione speciali Dei. ergo cum de tali revelatione non constet, non debet credi, de hoc factam esse ab Ecclesia determinationem."

[150] *Ibid.*: "confirmatur, quia certificari non poterat Ecclesia, de damnatione Origenis, nisi per specialem revelationem Deo factam: sed de tali revelatione, quod fuerit facta, nusquam habetur mentio…"

[151] *Ibid.*, p. 222: "… quia ad Ecclesiam non pertinet damnare animas hominum aut salvare, quia ad illum attinet solummodo, qui iudex est vivorum et mortuorum: quare ridiculum est si in decretis legitur."

[152] *Ibid.*: "hoc enim verbum renuere, nullo modo importare potest, id quod ipsi intendunt, sed nihil aliud intendit Papa, nisi hoc, quod scilicet non acceptantur opuscula eius [Origenes], ut Autentica in Ecclesia. nec ipse similiter ut probatus Doctor, et cuius dictis sit credendum, in Ecclesia recipitur. quod si etiam Papa non solum dixisset, Renuimus: sed etiam damnamus, nihil esset pro eis, quia sic etiam solemus dicere, in hoc Scotus damnat Thomam. Herueus Scotum, et sic de reliquis, in quibus semper loquutionibus, de damnatione doctrinae, et non animae ex ipso usitato et proprio loquendi modo, debemus intelligere."

> Indeed it is possible that many Doctors whose writings are Catholic and are being read every day by Catholics are in hell since it is agreed that someone does not err in faith but thinks rightly regarding all articles, and yet is in another mortal sin, and in that [sin] he dies. And the condemnation of a soul is entirely not relevant to the condemnation of a doctrine. Because that [condemnation of a soul] accompanies malice of the will. But this [condemnation of a doctrine] accompanies a defect of the intellect. Wherefore [this syllogism] is not effective: this [person] is in paradise. In consequence his sayings are Catholic.[153]

Pico makes a firm distinction between the condemnation of a soul, which is connected to malice of the will, and the condemnation of a doctrine, which is connected to a defect of the intellect. This is why it is possible that many Doctors whose *scripta catholica sunt* are nevertheless in hell, since faith is a matter of *recte sentire de omnibus articulis*. Conversely other Doctors may be in paradise even though their doctrines were condemned.[154] The syllogism *iste est in paradiso. ergo dicta eius sunt catholica* simply does not work, according to Pico, because—as we have seen above—*opinio* and *fides* derive from two different sources. One might say that he is pitting the authority of God via special revelation against the authority of the Church.

Pico concludes that Origen's condemnation concerns only his opinions and doctrines, and moreover occurred many years after his death, when he could no longer be accused retroactively of *pertinacia*.[155] He

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[153] *Ibid.*, pp. 222–223: "possibile enim est multos doctores, quorum scripta catholica sunt, et pro catholicis quotidie leguntur esse in inferno, quia stat aliquem in fide nihil errare, sed recte sentire de omnibus articulis, et tamen esse in alio peccato mortali, et in illo decedere. Et omnino impertinens est damnatio animae, ad damnationem doctrinae. quia illa attenditur penes maliciam voluntatis. Ista autem, penes defectum intellectus. quare nec valet: iste est in paradiso. ergo dicta eius sunt catholica."

[154] Pico uses the example of Celestinus and Pelagius, *ibid.*, p. 223: "Si Celestinus atque Pelagius in Ephesina synodo sunt damnati, quomodo poterunt illa capitula recipi, quorum damnantur authores? certum est autem, quod in illa synodo, Celestinus et Pelagius non fuerunt damnati, in se, id est in anima sua, sed in sua doctrina, tum quia aliter ut dictum est supra, damnare homines Ecclesia nec consuevit, nec potest: tum quia de eo debemus intelligere sententiatum, de quo prius est quaesitum et disputatum. sed in illa synodo, ut ex actis Concilii, patet, non fuit quaestio, Utrum animae Celestini et Pelagii essent in paradiso vel in inferno? sed an dicta eorum, et dogmata essent catholica an non catholica? quare et de hoc, id est, de eorum dogmatum veritate, et de authorum ipsorum, ut sic dogmatizantium approbatione, vel reprobatione, debemus intelligere sententiatum." Pelagius, who died c. 450, and his pupil Celestius, were two ecclesiastics who denied original sin. Their doctrines were condemned by a number of popes and synods. What Pico emphasizes is that their doctrines but not their persons were condemned.

[155] *Ibid*, pp. 223–224: "… sed de eo nihil aliud narratur, nisi quod erraverit in

warns *isti Magistri* that they should not impose new beliefs on the faithful by the power of their authority,[156] or, in other words, that they should not mix *opinio* and *fides*.

In his discussion concerning liberty of belief, Pico emphasizes the importance of *persuasio rationis*—conviction in the mind—for the believer; and he claims, citing Augustine, that someone cannot believe by the sheer power of his will.[157] Such arguments bring us once more to the realm of πιθανόν and rhetoric.[158] Here again Pico is not interested in determining what the truth is, but only in discovering the opinion which *apparuit bona vel probabilis*.[159] As to *persuasio rationis*, we notice that in a later discussion concerning the question of whether God understands, he attributes *ratio* to man only and defines it as a notion appropriate only to man.[160] What we can conclude from all this is that

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mysteriis fidei, et ad hunc errorem non sequitur absoluta damnatio Origenis in se, sed solum in scriptis, et in doctrina sua, ut patet ex praecedentibus. Et sic debemus ipsum iudicare damnatum ab Ecclesia et non aliter: postquam et pertinacem non fuisse eum, contra Ecclesiae determinationem, in illis opinionibus scimus, quia concilia in quibus damnatae fuerunt illae opiniones, fuerunt multo post mortem Origenis, ut patet ex historiis Graecis et Latinis."

On p. 214, Pico included *pertinacia* among a number of types of *malicia in voluntate*. Now, speaking again of Origen, he mentions it on its own. One wonders whether here Pico has especially in mind Thomas' emphasis on *pertinacia* as a criterion for heresy.

[156] *Ibid.*, p. 224: "Videant ergo isti Magistri, quod non recte adhuc, si etiam sint vera, quae ipsi contra me adducunt, est determinatum ab eis, contra meam conclusionem: et caveant ne nova credenda, fidelibus pro sua authoritate instituant, et ea esse de fide determinent: audiantque illam prohibitionem Domini, Deuteronomii quarto [Dt 4, 2]. Non addetis ad verbum, quod ego loquor vobis. quod dictum non solum damnat istos, qui authoritate sua, nova credenda prioribus superaddant, sed quia etiam catholicam veritatem, pro haeretica refellunt."

[157] *Ibid.*, p. 225: "Secunda autem pars conclusionis, quae est, Quod nullus credit aliquid esse praecise verum, quia vult credere id esse verum, est Augustini in pluribus locis, qui hoc saepius dicit, Quod non potest aliquis credere ex libero arbitrio, id est ex mero imperio voluntatis, sine rationis persuasione aut motivo [*De spiritu et littera* 34, 60: "His ergo modis quando Deus agit cum anima rationali, ut ei credat; neque enim credere potest quodlibet libero arbitrio, si nulla sit suasio vel vocatio cui credat…"] The phrase *rationis persuasio* does not appear in classical Latin or in Augustine, but it is clear that this *persuasio* is in the mind of the believer, who has persuaded himself, or become convinced. As for *nullus credit aliquid*… I cannot find an Agustinian source. This passage does not imply that the will has no central function to play in adopting this or that opinion, but merely that one adopts an opinion which has a content.

[158] For Pico, concluding from a passage or passages of Augustine, possibly from a secondary source, *persuasio* is *ratio probabilis*. See *ibid.*: "… ad credendum enim non sufficit, apprehensio terminorum articuli, sed ultra requiritur persuasio, aut aliqua ratio probabilis, ut allegatum est ex Augustino." *Ratio probabilis*, as I have been informed by Martin Stone, is a scholastic rendering of Aristotle's ἔνδοξα.

[159] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

[160] *Ibid.*, p. 2 34: "… sed nego istud intelligere, quod dicit iuxta modum loquendi

God has the truth and needs no *ratio*. The only truth man has is that revealed to him by God, but on many issues he needs his *ratio* to search for the truth. The result of this search, as we can see now, is only an opinion or a conviction.

At the end of an account of the concealed intelligence of the soul Pico explains his motives for the whole discussion of the problem of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. What interests us in this discussion is what he has to say about dogmatic and skeptical approaches to philosophical and theological problems, and about how much one should reveal to laymen:

> By the sacrament of the true and mystic body and blood, by the omnipotence of God, by reverence exhibited deservedly to His son and to the images of His heirs, let them read without malice, without envy, these things which we now write, i.e., first, let them not read these propositions as not interpreted [or] unfolded. When we exposed these [propositions] as worthy of being disputed among learned persons, we did not publish them as worthy of being read by all everywhere. For even there [in those propositions] there are so many impious dogmas of ancient philosophers [such as] Averroes and Alexander, and of so many others, [dogmas] which we (though we always admitted, observed, announced, both in public and in private, that [those dogmas] are alien both to true and proper philosophy and to the faith) still while we were contemplating a scholastic exercise we considered [these dogmas in the above-mentioned propositions] as worthy of being examined among a few learned persons in a secret assembly in the manner of the Academies.[161] Indeed anyone who would read this book of propositions which were to be examined could have been warned by its title—since I distinguish these [propositions] which express my own opinion, [and] likewise [these propositions which express opinions of] others, that these propositions were not proposed by me, as my own, [or] as true opinions but [only] as [opinions] which were believed by those [others]. Thus he also could suspect that even if dogmas of others have been introduced while [other dogmas were] invented, still both these [invented dogmas] and those [dogmas of others] seem to me true and probable. Therefore those who hate me, for

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Dionysii, noticiam angelo appropriatam: sicut et ratio dicit, noticiam homini appropriatam, iuxta quod etiam improprie dicetur esse ratio in Deo." Pico clearly separates between angelic, divine and human cognition, *ibid.*, p. 235: "nihil aliud intendebam, nisi quod noticia angelica, quae intellectualis noticiae nomen sibi appropriat, magis distat ab infinita noticia Dei, quae omnia per essentiam cognoscit, quam distet a noticia rationativa, animae rationali vel homini appropriata."

[161] This is a clear echo of Augustine, *Contra Academicos* 3, 20, 43: "illis [Academicis] morem fuisse occultandi sententiam suam, nec eam cuiquam nisi qui secum ad senectutem usque vixissent aperire consuesse." On Pico's possible confusion between different Academic practices see n. 167 below. We have already seen Pico's direct citation from *Contra Academicos* in n. 80 above.

> that reason would not read these [propositions]—because they are mine; those who love me, for that reason would not read [these propositions]—because from those [propositions] which are mine, many more could be deduced which are not mine.[162]

While these propositions were worth discussing among learned men, they should not be read by everyone, claims Pico, since they include many impious doctrines of ancient philosophers. I defended these doctrines, he says, in the manner of a disputation, but I always confessed, maintaned, and declared, both in public and in private, that they were foreign both to the true and right philosophy and to faith. I nevertheless undertook to dispute them as a scholastic exercise,[163] in the manner of the Academics, in a secret assembly among a few learned men. This is not the only place in his writings where Pico mentions such an exercise. In *De ente et uno* (1491) he prefers the skeptical to the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides*[164] and describes the dialogue

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[162] Pico, *Apologia*… p. 237: "… per veri et mystici corporis sanguinisque sacramentum, per Dei omnipotentiam, per exhibendam merito filii eius, et cohaeredum imaginibus reverentiam, legant sine livore, sine invidia, quae nunc scribimus, priora, id est, ipsas propositiones, non enarratas, non explicitas, non legant. quando inter doctos eas proposuimus disputandas, non passim legendas omnibus publicavimus. Nam et ibi plurima sunt, impia dogmata, veterum philosophorum Averrois et Alexandri, et aliorum quam plurimum, quae nos (etsi semper professi sumus, asservimus, praedicavimus, publice et privatim, non minus a vera rectaque philosophia, quam a fide esse aliena.) scholasticam tamen exercitationem meditantes, *de more Academiarum*, inter paucos et doctos, secreto congressu, disputanda suscepimus. Qui vero ipsum leget libellum propositionum disputandarum, ut ex ipso poterit titulo admoneri, dum quae ex nostra dicuntur sententia, quae item ex aliorum, discerno, non proponi illas a me, ut meas, ut veras opiniones, sed ut creditas ab illis. ita et suspicari poterit, et si aliorum dicantur dogmata et inventa, visa tamen mihi, et haec, et illa vera et probabilia. Qui ergo me oderunt, ideo illa non legant, quia nostra sunt: qui me amant, ideo non legant, quia ex illis, quae mea sunt, cogitare plurima possunt, quae non sunt nostra."

[163] "*scholastica exercitatio*" in the sense of an ancient school exercise, not in that of the mediaeval scholasticism.

[164] Garin [ed.], *De hominis dignitate, heptaplus*… p. 390: "Ego vero hoc de Parmenide primum dixero, neque toto illo dialogo quicquam asseverari nec, si maxime asseveretur quicquam, tamen ad liquidum invenire unde Platoni dogma istiusmodi ascribamus. Certe liber inter dogmaticos non est censendus, quippe qui totus nihil aliud est quam *dialectica quaedam exercitatio*. Cui nostrae sententiae tantum abest ut ipsa dialogi verba refragentur ut nullae exstent magis et arbitrariae et violentae enarrationes, quam quae ab his allatae sunt qui alio sensu interpretari Parmenidem Platonis voluerunt. Sed omittamus omnes interpretes." Here Pico seems to adoped a position of those against whose opinions Proclus argues in Book I, chapter nine of his *Platonic Theology*, pp. 34–40, in Saffrey and Westerink's edition (see next note). These seem to be either followers of the skeptical Academy, or early dogmatic 'Middle' Platonists who attempted to reach a compromise with the skeptics and admit that some dialogues are indeed not dogmatic

as nothing other than a *dialectica quaedam exercitatio*.[165] We have already seen that, at the beginning of the *Apologia*, Pico drew an important analogy between gymnastic and literary dispute.[166] The *mos Academiarum* might then imply the ancient skeptical Academy which believed in testing and refuting every dogma.[167] As is indicated by the title of Pico's book, it consists of a collection of opinions to be discussed. I did

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but gymnastic. On this second possibility see John Glucker, 'Whose Plato?', in *Scripta Classica Israelica* XVI (1997), pp. 271–278. Whoever these people may be, they obviously amphasize the sentence in Plato, *Parmenides*, 136c2–5: "… καὶ τἆλλα αὖ πρὸς αὑτά τε καὶ πρὸς ἄλλο ὅτι ἂν προαιρῇ ἀεί, ἐάντε ὡς ὂν ὑποθῇ ὃ ὑπετίθεσο, ἄντε ὡς μὴ ὄν, εἰ μέλλεις τελέως *γυμνασάμενος* κυρίως διόψεσθαι τὸ ἀληθές."

[165] In the Platonic tradition there were several interpretations concerning the way Plato treated divine matters. See, e.g., in Proclus, *Platonic Theology*… [I.4], vol. I, p. 17: "Φαίνεται γὰρ οὐ τὸν αὐτὸν πανταχοῦ τρόπον μετιὼν τὴν περὶ τῶν θείων διδασκαλίαν, ἀλλ' ὁτὲ μὲν ἐνθεαστικῶς ὁτὲ δὲ διαλεκτικῶς ἀνελίττων τὴν περὶ αὐτῶν ἀλήθειαν, καὶ ποτὲ μὲν συμβολικῶς ἐξαγγέλλων τὰς ἀρρήτους αὐτῶν ἰδιότητας, ποτὲ δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν εἰκόνων ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἀνατρέχων καὶ τὰς πρωτουργοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς αἰτίας τῶν ὅλων ἀνευρίσκων"; p. 18: "Ὁμοίως δὲ αὖ κἀν τῷ Παρμενίδῃ τάς τε τοῦ ὄντος ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑνὸς προόδους καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἑνὸς ὑπεροχὴν διὰ τῶν πρώτων ὑποθέσεων ἐκφαίνει διαλεκτικῶς καὶ, ὡς αὐτὸς ἐν ἐκείνοις λέγει, κατὰ τὴν τελεωτάτην τῆς μεθόδου ταύτης διαίρεσιν." Proclus himself seems to make some compromise here, and agree that in the first hypothesis Plato does use dialectic. But in chapter ten of the same book, pp. 42–46 he makes it clear that in his view, the dialogue as a whole is Plato's exposition of his theology. Pico, it appears, accepted the extreme position discussed in the last note. Pico's familiarity with Proclus is beyond dispute. Among the theses taken from other authors, the largest number are from Proclus. See also Carlos Steel [ed.], *Proclus, commentaire sur le Parménide de Platon, traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke*, 2 vols. (Leuven 1982), vol. 1, pp. 14–15. On the ancient history of Parmenides' interpretations see Carlos Steel, 'Une histoire de l'interprétation du Parménide dans l'antiquité', in Maria Barbanti and Francesco Romano [eds.], *Il Parmenide di Platone e la sua tradizione* (Catania 2002), pp. 11–40; see especially pp. 24–31 for the ancient sources of Pico's attitude.

[166] See n. 33 and context.

[167] In a previous passage (n. 162) we have seen that Pico took the *mos Academicorum*, cited by Augustine, to mean the Academic custom of talking only to a few people in private. Yet in the same passage, he seems to imply that what the Academics did in secret was to engage in dialectic exercises. It seems that he is confusing two practices ascribed to the skeptical Academy which he found in his sources. The practice of speaking to only a few select and mature people at a time, which Augustine mentions in that passage of *Contra Academicos*, is part of the Neoplatonic tradition, going back at least to the opening passages of Proclus' *Platonic Theology*. Yet in this Neoplatonic view, what the Academics were supposed to do in such secret meetings was to disclose Platonic *dogmata* to this select audience. On this Neoplatonic myth see John Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy* (Göttingen 1978), chapter 7, pp. 296–321. The dialectical exercise—that is, arguing for and against each given hypothesis (*in utramque parte disputare*)—was part of what the Academics did in public lectures and courses, not in secret, as part of their disputations with other schools. Augustine is quite aware of the distinction between the public disputations against the opinios of other philosophers and the alleged teaching of Platonic doctrines in secret: see e.g., *Contra Academicos* III, 17. 38–39 as against 20. 43.

not propose these opinions as my own or as true opinions, he says, but rather as opinions that were held by others. Thus, it could be suspected that although these doctrines were devised by others, they nevertheless seemed *vera et probabilia* to Pico. And he concludes: let those who hate me not read these doctrines because they are mine; let those who love me not read them because among the doctrines which are mine, there are many which readers might think are not Christian. Let me sum up some of my findings so far.

Pico is apparently using the framework of a scholastic *quaesita disputatio*, set out as a series of questions, which he answers by drawing on the authority of various Church Fathers and Doctors. After all, we should keep in mind that the *Apologia* was aimed at answering the accusations of the papal commission, some of whose members represented contemporary scholastic theology. Yet, while employing what appears to be the accepted form of a scholastic disputation, he modifies it from within, not by trying to adduce valid proofs (*demonstrare*), but rather by recommending (*probare*) what he considers to be probable. In this manner, he adopts a position which he also explicitly expresses from time to time and which alters fundamentally the status of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. For him, they represent probable, but not necessary, opinions. His discussion is essentially historical, and sometimes even philological, and entails comparing and contrasting views from various sources, and developing critical stances on the basis of these comparisons. In effect, this is a historicization of patristic and scholastic theology. I suggest that in the *Apologia* Pico presented his model for the theological disputation which should have taken place in Rome.

He points out the confusion (from his point of view) between opinion and faith, and between error and heresy, characteristic of contemporary scholastic theology. In his view, this derives from a confusion between that which is necessary and that which is merely possible or probable—in practice, between principles of faith, which are based on the indisputable authority of Scripture, the first four councils and the Creed, on the one hand, and the later formulations in matters of faith and opinions of theologians, on the other hand. Here he seems to construct his own relatively new humanist theology solely on that which is necessary, accompanied by a critical examination of that which is merely possible or probable. All that is necessary as far as faith is concerned is Scrip-

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One cannot blame Pico for being confused in a field where scholars are still sorting out some of the basic problems. I am grateful to John Glucker for this information.

ture, without additions or subtractions, and revelation, including the first four councils and the Creed. It is quite clear from Pico's discussion of the salvation of Origen—where he maintains that a special revelation is the sole criterion for determining whether or not Origen was saved—that for him the decrees of binding Church councils were subordinated to revelation. This is what connects him, on the one hand, to Ficino, who bases his own humanist theology on moments of revelation such as prophecies and miracles, and, on the other, to the preacher and prophet Savonarola, who claimed to be subject to direct inspiration from God and who maintained that even the pope could err.

3. *Pico's Attitude to Philosophy: Between Academic Skepticism and Religious Certainty*

In the previous section I did not try to argue that Pico was an Academic skeptic, but rather to show that he used some patterns, terms, and arguments, which were appropriated from the ancient skeptical school, in order both to defend his position and refute the accusations of the papal commission, as well as to criticize some aspects of scholastic theology.[168] This was not the only case in which Pico used skeptical arguments.

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[168] Pico had in his library Cicero's *Academica*, and also Augustine's *Contra Academicos* (from which we have seen in n. 80 a direct citation). See Pearl Kibre, *The Library of Pico Della Mirandola* (New-York 1936), pp. 50, 62. Charles B. Schmitt in his *Cicero Scepticus: A Study of the Influence of the Academica in the Renaissance* (The Hague 1972), claims regarding the *Academica* on p. 47: "What began as a somewhat limited interest in classical texts by Petrarca and his circle, developed into something much wider in the fifteenth century. In the case of the *Academica* this took the form of its being mentioned more often in library inventories, its being referred to more frequently in the learned correspondence of the humanists, and numerous new manuscript copies of the work being prepared"; [On the proliferation of manuscript copies see now Terence J. Hunt, *A Textual History of Cicero's Academici Libri* (Leiden 1998)] "The *Lucullus* also, however, became the object of greater interest in the fifteenth century. Well known humanists of the early part of the century, including Guarino da Verona, Giovanni Aurispa, Poggio Bracciolini, Angelo and Pier Candido Decembrio, and Giovanni Dominici, all either owned the work or were interested in it." But still Schmitt states on p. 48 that the lack of commentaries on the work shows that it did not draw the same attention as did the recovery of Lucretius, Plato, or the letters to Atticus. Regarding the Florentine circle of Ficino and Pico he remarks on p. 52 that "on the whole, however, both Ficino and Pico, as well as most of the important Platonist thinkers of the Renaissance period, paid little attention to the Academic scepticism which was so integral a part of the Platonic tradition in antiquity"; and on p. 53: "In fact, one is somewhat surprised that we do not find

In this section I shall introduce some other similarities between Pico and what can be regarded as a skeptical or non dogmatic attitude in relation to philosophy; but I shall also discuss some other, non-skeptical aspects of Pico's attitude to philosophy.

Pico's affinity with skeptical philosophical positions could be demonstrated (as we have already seen in n. 164) also from one of his famous controversies with Ficino, regarding the interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides*, shown in *De ente et uno* of 1491.[169] In this composition Pico wished to show that there was concord between Plato and Aristotle.[170] He argues that while in Aristotle the terms *unum, ens, verum*, and *bonum* are used interchangeably and with an equal range of meanings, the *Academia* prefers to put *unum* before *ens* and regard it as more simple and universal.[171] *Academia* in this context almost certainly means the immediate successors of Plato and especially Speusippus and Xenocrates.[172] Such a notion of a dogmatic ancient Academy distinct from Plato is unusual in Pico's day, and we could contrast it, as Pico himself does, with Ficino's Neoplatonic interpretations of the Platonic dialogues, an interpretation which maintained its influence in Europe at least until the nineteenth century.[173] Pico then turns to two places in the Platonic dialogues in order to examine the status of *unum* and *ens*.[174] With regard

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more attention being paid to Academic scepticism by Platonically oriented Renaissance thinkers. Almost to a man they moved in the direction of syncretism, following the lead of Pico and Ficino. Little attention is paid to the figure of Socrates the doubter, to Plato's indecisive dialogues, and to the sceptical tendencies of the New Academy." In the present chapter I shall try to present a more complex picture, at least of Pico, and to point out that "syncretism" is not always an accurate or even relevant term with regard to his activities.

169 See the discussion of Michael J.B. Allen on the controversies between Pico and Ficino in his 'The Second Ficino-Pico Controversy: Parmenidean Poetry, Eristic, and the One', in Garfagnini [ed.], *Marsilio Ficino*… vol. 2, pp. 417–455.

170 Garin [ed.], *De hominis dignitate, heptaplus*… p. 386: "… qui concordem utriusque facio philosophiam, rogabas quomodo et defenderetur in ea re Aristoteles et Platoni magistro consentiret." See also his letter to Ermolao Barbaro of 1484 cited in n. 184.

171 *Ibid.*, p. 388: "Aristoteles multis in locis respondere haec sibi invicem et aequali esse ambitu dicit, unum scilicet et ens, verum item et bonum. Sed de his postea. Resistit Academia cui placet unum esse prius ente; prius autem cum dicunt et simplicius intelligi volunt et communius."

172 On Speusippus see Arist. *Metaph.* VII 2, 1028b18 ff. (fr. 33a Lang; 48 Isnardi Parente); ps.-Alexander in Arist. *Metaph*, p. 462, 34 ff. Hayduck (fr. 33b Lang; 49 Isnardi Parente); Asclep. in Arist. *Metaph*, p. 379, 12 ff. Hayduck (fr. 33c Lang; 50 Isnardi Parente). On Xenocrates see fragments 1–71 Isnardi Parente.

173 But see Jill Kraye, 'Ficino in the Firing Line: A Renaissance Neoplatonist and His Critics', in Allen, Rees, and Davies [eds.], *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology*… pp. 377–397.

174 Garin [ed.], *De hominis dignitate, heptaplus*… p. 390: "De ente et uno duobus locis

to the *Parmenides* he argues that the dialogue does not contain dogmas regarding the superiority of τὸ ἕν, but rather, as mentioned above, that the entire dialogue should be regarded as exercise in dialectic.[175] Pico probably found this type of intepretation in late ancient sources, and combined the evidence of some of them;[176] but he also suggests without elaboration an original intepretation based on his own close reading of the dialogue, according to its sequence, how it begins, in which direction it moves, what it promises, and what it accomplishes.[177] In other words, Pico posits a careful and sensitive reading of every part of the dialogue. If such a detailed interpretative reading were undertaken, Pico argues, it would no doubt prove that Plato meant this dialogue to be an exercise in dialectic,[178] and that there are no proofs and demonstrations there (even though the Platonists seek them everywhere), but only dialectic inquiry and examination.[179] According to Pico, then, the

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invenio Platonem disputantem, in *Parmenide* scilicet et *Sophiste*. Contendunt Academici utrobique a Platone unum supra ens poni."

[175] *Ibid.*: "Ego vero hoc de *Parmenide* primum dixero, neque toto illo dialogo quicquam asseverari nec, si maxime asseveretur quicquam, tamen ad liquidum invenire unde Platoni dogma istiusmodi ascribamus. Certe liber inter dogmaticos non est censendus, quippe qui totus nihil aliud est quam dialectica quaedam exercitatio. Cui nostrae sententiae tantum abest ut ipsa dialogi verba refragentur ut nullae exstent magis et arbitrariae et violentae enarrationes, quam quae ab his allatae sunt qui alio sensu interpretari *Parmenidem* Platonis voluerunt."

[176] Plato regarded by some as not dogmatic: D.L. 3, 51–52; Plato as an ephectic: Anon.Proleg. X, pp. 204–207 Hermann; 21–25 Westerink. Plato's *Parmenides* as a logical dialogue: D.L. 3, 58; Albinus, Eisag. III. According to Diogenes Laertius, *Parmenides* had a subtitle περὶ ἰδεῶν, which almost certainly goes back to Thrasyllus, while the division into logical, ethical, and physical dialogues is probably later. On these divisions see Heinrich Dörrie/Matthias Baltes, *Der Platonismus in der Antike*, Band 2 (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstat 1990), pp. 86–92 (texts), 513–520 (interpretation). On the history of these subtitles and divisions see Glucker, 'Whose Plato…' especially pp. 273–274, with sources and secondary literature, mentioning also that some dialogues were described in antiquity as "gymnastic". How far Pico knew these sources should be checked; but he must have been familiar with Proclus, *Theologia Platonica*, I, 9, where the opponents describe the aim of Plato's *Parmenides* as λογικὴ γυμνασία.

[177] Garin [ed.], *De hominis dignitate, heptaplus*… p. 390: "Sed omittamus omnes interpretes. Ipsam inspiciamus dialogi seriem, quid ordiatur, quo tendat, quid promittat, quid exequatur."

[178] *Ibid.*, p. 392: "Confessum autem apud omnes, quod et sequentia manifestant, per haec verba ab illo dialecticam significari." *Haec verba* are Parmenides' famous words to Socrates, which Pico has just quoted in Ficino's translation of Plato, *Parmenides*, 135d3–6: "ceterum collige teipsum diligentiusque te, dum iuvenis es, in ea facultate exerce, quae inutilis multis videtur, unde ab illis nugacitas sive garrulitas nuncupata, alioquin veritas te fugiet."

[179] *Ibid.*, p. 394: "Quibus etiam testimoniis si non credimus, ipsum percurramus dia-

Parmenides is a dialogue on dialectic as the method for searching for the truth and not a dialogue which contains Plato's doctrine, or the doctrines of his immediate successors, regarding the status and superiority of τὸ ἕν. On this issue, he disregards the doctrines of Speusippus and Xenocrates, whom he calls *Academici*, and adopts an interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides* which is explicitly based on the skeptical Academy's

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logum, videbimusque nusquam aliquid adfirmari, sed ubique solum quaeri [cf. Cicero, *Academicus Primus* 46: "… Platonem… cuius in libris nihil adfirmatur et in utramque partem multa disseruntur, de omnibus quaeritur, nihil certi dicitur." Pico's words clearly echo this sentence of Cicero], hoc si sit, quid consequetur, quid item si non sit. Occasionem autem suae sententiae de ente et uno hinc Academici aucupati sunt, quod prima positione hoc se problemate exercet ut videat, si omnia sint unum, quidnam consequatur; respondetque futurum ut illud unum, quod esse ponimus, sit impartibile, sit infinitum, nusquam sit et cum id genus multa enumeret, affert et hoc inter alia, futurum scilicet ut illud unum non sit ens. Attende autem etiam si haec dialectica non sit exercitatio, sed de ente unoque dogma tradatur, quantum haec different, asserere scilicet unum super ens esse et hoc asserere futurum ut, si omnia sint unum, illud unum ens non sit." Allen relates Pico's non-dogmatic interpretation to Albinus ('The Second Ficino-Pico Controversy…' p. 427) but he does not give any reference to Albinus' texts, nor does he discuss the status of Albinus in the Renaissance, but only remarks that "as for the Renaissance, the topic awaits further research." [On this issue see above, n. 167] On the other hand, he criticizes Klibansky's position regarding the originality of Pico's intepretation (pp. 427–428, and n. 26 there), and after a long and detailed discussion of Ficino's interpretation of the *Parmenides* he concludes on p. 455 that "Ficino emerges accordingly, if only in this respect, as a good deal more original than Pico, pace Klibansky." Allen does not relate Pico's position to the Academic and non-dogmatic school with which he could have been familiar through much better known and influential authors like Cicero and Augustine. [On an echo of Cicero see the beginning of this note] Furthermore, Allen is so intent on representing a sharp contrast between Pico and Ficino, and on the issue of who was more original, that he does not see that there is some similarity between the two positions. Pico, who does not mention Ficino at all in his composition, criticized the extra-dogmatic Neoplatonic interpretation which can be related to the *Syrianici*—those who succeeded Syrianus and those from whom Ficino, as Allen shows, tries to separate himself (p. 443). Pico seems to identify all *Platonici* with the *Syrianici* and to neglect any other Neoplatonic dogmatic interpretation of the dialogue, while Ficino had taken the middle path in which the dialogue contains both eristic and theological aspects (p. 453). But what is impressive is that both Pico and Ficino are paying much attention to the dramatic elements in the dialogue: "The argument here seems to be based upon the dramatic necessity for consistency in characterisation and also to be aimed specifically at Pico's contention that Plato had had Zeno contend that what Parmenides was about to discuss was not appropriate for an old man to examine in an assembly of many people. In other words, both Ficino and Pico agree that normally it would be indecorous for Plato to have Parmenides treat of dialectic alone; but, whereas Pico maintains that Parmenides continued in the debate only because the company was small, Ficino maintains that he continued because he was going to deal with the highest matters of theology" (pp. 441–442). Allen's evidence, then, shows—despite his conclussions—the originality of both Pico and Ficino, certainly in comparison with many modern interpretations of Platonic dialogues.

view of the nature of Plato's dialogues. The clear echo of a central sentence of Cicero's *Academicus Primus*[180] on this issue leaves little room for doubt. One should, however, remember that even this 'skeptical' interpretation of a Platonic dialogue, however much it may be influenced by the skeptical Academy, does not commit Pico to a wholesale skeptical attitude to philosophy, or even to Plato's philosophy. After all, the context is that of comparing a Platonic dialogue with the views of the dogmatic Aristotle. All-in-all, Pico never consistently follows any philosophical school or approach, but he picks and chooses those elements of the various philosophies known to him as they suit his different needs in different contexts.

Let us now see how Pico uses the Academic concept of *probabilitas* in another context.

As we have already seen in the previous section, Pico tried to reach harmony (*concordia*) between probable philosophical and theological opinions in themselves, and between them and the faith, just as the full harmony between different parts of the Scriptures was for Augustine (quoted by Pico) evidence of their unique status as infallible truth. Through this harmony, Pico wanted, in some way, to achieve some measure of certainty—which is fully attained only in Scripture—in the realm of probable philosophical and theological opinions. One notes that this attempt to achieve certainty among 'probable' philosophical and theological opinions in itself transcends the skeptical Academy's ἐποχή. With Pico theological truth at the level of infallible revelation can help the philosopher to overcome his skepticism at the level of theological opinion. Here, Pico already begins to transcend his Academic skepticism in the direction of the truth of proper theology. This raises the wider problem of Pico's views concerning philosophy and truth. We have also seen that Pico has three arguments to show that the opinions of saints and Doctors are not *infallibilis veritas*. I shall sum them up now:

One. They themselves expressed doubts concerning their own opinions.

Two. They disagree among themselves, and therefore at least some of their opinions must be false (the classical argument from *discordia philosophorum*, διαφωνία τῶν φιλοσόφων).

Three. In any case, *infallibilis veritas* is the prerogative of Scripture alone.

[180] See the beginning of last note.

Pico supports his arguments by citing Augustine to the effect that the total harmony among the various parts of Scripture is evidence for their truth. He adds that only people who have not read the writings of the saints do not realize how much they contradict each other. Yet none of them has been condemned for heresy. In this realm of opinions one should avoid the expressions 'true' and 'false', which belong only in the higher sphere of Scriptural truth and its opposite, heresy, and employ terms like 'more probable' and 'less probable'. At this stage of probable opinions, even the *concordia* we reach is only between *probabilia*. But one notices that this applies only at this stage.

In a letter dated February 11, 1490, to Aldus Manutius, Pico expounded his view regarding the relations between philosophy, theology, and religion:

> You write what you intend to do, apply yourself to philosophy, but with this rule, that you would remember that there is no philosophy that keeps us away from the truth of the mysteries; philosophy searches for the truth, theology finds the truth, religion possesses the truth.[181]

Philosophy here is represented only as a method of, or an instrument for, discovering the truth. It is not a set of dogmas which represent the truth. Philosophy only searches for the truth: this is the position of the Academic skeptic. Opposed to philosophy, for Pico, seems to be rhetoric, which is no more than an instrument for hiding the truth.[182] Yet there is another important aspect in Pico's letter: it is the same truth, the one and only truth of the mysteries of the faith, that philosophy searches for, theology finds, and religion possesses. Here again we see that the skeptical ideas of *probabilitas* and *discordia philosophorum* are employed only as stages in the attempt to reach an infallible truth, the truth of revelation, which goes beyond anything the ancient skeptics would have admitted.

In another undated letter to Ermolao Barbaro, Pico describes three kinds of life: civic, contemplative, and religious. The first is related to

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[181] Pico, *Omnia opera*… p. 359: "Tu quod te scribis facturum, accinge ad philosophiam, sed hac lege ut memineris nullam esse philosophiam, quae a mysteriorum veritate nos avocet; philosophia veritatem quaerit, Theologia invenit, religio possidet." This is an interesting statement. Philosophy only searches for the truth: this is the position of the Academic skeptic. The difference between theology which only finds the truth and religion which possesses the truth seems to correspond to the difference between the intellect and the will. As we have seen before, the will is necessary for a commitment to an act of faith.

[182] See below notes 187–188.

prudence, the second to doctrine, and the third to the search for sanctity.[183] The analogy as far as the non-religious aspects of life are concerned, as we shall also see in another letter, is between the philosoper and the citizen, philosophy and civic life and practices. This in itself is a mediaeval commonplace, which was also discussed by humanists, but it tells us nothing about Pico's conception of philosophy.

But in another letter, which was written in Florence and dated December 6, 1484, to his friend Ermolao Barbaro, Pico announced that he had recently moved from Aristotle to the *Academia*, and that he did it not as a refugee (with the implication that he had totally abandoned Aristotle), but rather as an examiner or an explorer (*sed non transfuga… verum explorator*).[184] The emphasis is again on the method rather than on certain dogma. But it is interesting that immediately after this statement, Pico carries on with an observation concerning an agreement between Plato and Aristotle in content, and an only apparent disagreement in their style. Here the key concepts are *verba* and *res*: … *ita ut si verba spectes, nihil pugnatius, si res nihil concordius*. This in itself is not the position of the skeptical Academy, which regarded Plato as a skeptic and Aristotle as a dogmatic. On the other hand, Pico's statement calls to mind a later controversy, recorded by the Academic Cicero, in which *res* and *verba* are also opposed, and where the context is a philosophical controversy. Cicero (*De natura deorum* I, 16) reports the view of Antiochus, according to which, on a central ethical issue, *Stoici cum Peripateticis re concinere videntur verbis discrepare*. Cicero himself disagrees and claims: *haec enim est non verborum parva sed rerum permagna dissensio*. It appears that Pico remembered the phraseology of this passage, although it is doubtful whether he saw in it an Academic skeptical position. But the very

[183] Pico, *Omnia opera…* p. 359: "Tria fere vivendi genera: Civile, contemplativum, religiosum. In illo prudentiam, in secundo doctrinam, in tertio quasi fastigio totius vitae, praeter duo illa, etiam sanctitatem exigimus." The first is obviously *vita practica*, the second is *vita contemplativa*, the third, which transcends but includes both, is a third kind of life belonging to religion rather than philosophy. Is this an original idea of Pico, or has he borrowed it from the scholastic tradition?

[184] *Ibid.*, pp. 368–369: "Diverti nuper ab Aristotele in Academiam, sed non transfuga, ut inquit ille, verum explorator. Video tamen (dicam tibi Hermolae quod sentio) duo in Platone agnoscere, et Homericam illam eloquendi facultatem, supra prosam orationem sese attollentem, et sensuum, si quis eos altius introspiciat, cum Aristotele omnino communionem, ita ut si verba spectes, nihil pugnantius, si res nihil concordius, quod si quando dabitur, id quod votorum meorum summa est, tecum ad dies aliquot Philosophari…"

fact that this sentence follows immediately after his statement about the Academy suggests that some connection existed in his thought.[185]

Let us now return to Pico's negative attitude to rhetoric as the opposing pole to philosophy. In a letter, written in Florence in July, 1484, to Lorenzo de' Medici, Pico compares the poetry of Dante, Petrarch, and Lorenzo himself, three poets in the Florentine 'language', and praises Lorenzo's poetry.[186] In this literary discussion Pico introduces his critical attitude towards oratorical ornaments and his preference for an examination of what he regards as the real foundation and meaning of words.[187]

Pico's attitude to the relation between philosophy and rhetoric presents us with another aspect of his attitude to philosophy in general. The philosopher and the orator represent for Pico models, as we can see from Pico's famous letter to Ermolao Barbaro. Barbaro attacked in his letter to Pico from April 1485 the crude scholastic style. Pico's response from June 1485, one of his first Latin works in a perfect humanist style, included an apology for the mediaeval philosopher: while the philosopher searches for the truth, the orator conceals it with empty words and deceives his audience:

> There are so many contradictions between the duty of the orator and the duty of the philosopher that they could not contradict each other more. For what else is the orator's duty except to lie, to cheat, to deceive, to trick? Indeed it is your [aim], as you say, to be able at will to turn black into white, [and] white into black, to be able to elevate, to reject, to magnify, to reduce, whatever you wish, and finally, by speaking, to transform the things themselves, through the so-called magic powers of eloquence on which you pride yourself into whatever shape and appearance you wish, so that such things will appear to your audience not as they are by their own nature, but as you want, not because they

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[185] Similar expression appear in the context of a similar cotroversy between the Stoics and the Peripatetics in Cicero, *De finibus* III, 41. Pico may have remembered this passage as well.

[186] Pico, *Omnia opera*… pp. 348–351. Compare with the Scotist commentary of Giorgio Benigno Salviati to a sonnet of Lorenzo de' Medici, for a scholastic treatment of Lorenzo's poems, discussed in Cesare Vasoli, 'Un commento scotista a un sonetto del Magnifico: L'*Opus septem quastionum* di Giorgio Benigno Salviati', in Roberto Cardini, Eugenio Garin, Lucia Cesarini Martinalli, Giovanni Pascucci [eds], *Tradizione classica e letteratura umanistica. Per Alessandro Perosa*, 2 vols. (Roma 1985), vol. 2, pp. 533–575. See, e.g., the discussion of love on pp. 559–564.

[187] *Ibid.*, p. 349: "Cum vero illam suam verborum ostentat suppellectilem, sua unguenta cincinnos, et flores, admoneret saepe si adesset Castritius quod admonuit in Graecho, ne falleremur rotundato sono, et versuum cursu. Sed inspiceremus quidnam subesset, quae sedes, quod firmamentum, quis fundus verbis."

> become [what you want them to become] but because they [appear to the audience] to be what they are not. All this, what else is it except pure falsehood, pure deceit, pure delusion?[188]

The philosopher on the other hand is committed to knowing the truth and to demonstrating it to others.[189] It may well be that the area of activity of the philosopher is the theoretical life mentioned above, while the area of activity of the orator is the practical life; but in our context, Pico employs different terms. He points out the difference between the *Academia*—the realm of the philosopher, and the *respublica*—the realm of the orator, where everything is considered according to *popularis trutina* and thus flowers are far preferred to fruits.[190] But this critique of the practices of the *respublica* does not mean for Pico that the political system does not work or that the philosopher cannot influence republican practices, but quite the opposite.[191] The orator is not the typical representative of the political life. Pico relates the philosopher to the citizen of the republic and contrasts both to actor and dancer (*histrio et saltator*),

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[188] Bausi [ed.], *Filosofia o eloquenza*… p. 40: "Tanta est inter oratoris munus et philosophi pugnantia, ut pugnare magis invicem non possint. Nam quid aliud rhetoris officium, quam mentiri, decipere, circumvenire, praestigiari? Est enim vestrum, ut dicitis, posse pro arbitrio in candida nigrum vertere, in nigra candidum; posse, quaecunque vultis, tollere, abiicere, amplificare, extenuare dicendo; demum res ipsas magicis quasi, quod vos iactatis, viribus eloquentiae in quam libuerit faciem habitumque transformare, ut non qualia sunt suopte ingenio, sed qualia volueritis, non fiant quidem, sed, cum non sint, esse tamen audientibus appareant. Hoc totum, estne quicquam aliud quam merum mendacium, mera impostura, merum praestigium…" I have already cited this passage in chapter two, n. 66. A discussion of the historical background, Latin style, and the philosophical contents of the correspondence between Pico and Barbaro, together with a full English translation, can be found in Quirinus Breen, 'Document. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola on the Conflict of Philosophy and Rhetoric', in *Journal of the History of Ideas* XIII (1952), pp. 384–412; a translation of Melanchton's reply to Pico from 1558 is on pp. 413–426. I would like to thank Dr. Pernille Harsting for this reference. A more recent study of Pico's letter is in Francesco Bausi, *Nec rhetor neque philosophus. Fonti, lingua e stile nelle prime opere latine di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1484–1487)* (Città di Castello 1996), chapter one. See also the remarks of Garin in n. 2 above.

[189] *Ibid.*, p. 42: "Eritne huic [oratori] cum philosopho affinitas, cuius studium omne in cognoscenda et demonstranda caeteris veritate versatur?" The expression *cognoscenda veritas* implies that the philosopher already knows the truth. But in his letter to Aldus (see n. 181 above) Pico writes *philosophia veritatem quaerit, theologia invenit.* One should not expect too much consistency between two letters written with a distance of six years between them.

[190] *Ibid.*: "… non est eorum qui in Academia, sed qui in republica illa versantur, in qua quae fiunt quaeque dicuntur populari trutina examinantur, apud quam flores fructibus longe praeponderant."

[191] Is Pico here using *respublica* in the ancient sense, signifying any political unit, or—in a letter to Lorenzo—the republican structure of contemporary Florence?

arts which are symbolical of the orator. On the stage we can admire the art and talent of a good actor or dancer, but in the political activity of a republic the qualities which are worthy of admiration are different. In fact, the same qualities that we admire in actors we abominate in citizens or philosophers.[192] The philosopher and the man of the state do not act in the same manner, but rather they have a different behaviour (*habitus*): while the philosopher uses external means only when necessity demands, the man of the state uses these means to find favour. If the man of state neglects these means he would not be a man of state, and if the philosopher affects them, he would not be a philosopher.[193]

Here again philosohy, for Pico, does not consist of certain dogmas or doctrines but rather of a certain habit or condition, in analogy to political activity. In philosophy, Pico emphasizes, attention should not be given to form and style except in cases of necessity; what we philosophers write and not how we write, utility, gravity, and reverence, rather than pleasure; quiet examination by the few rather than the applause of the theatre—these are the true concerns of philosophy.[194] This is how Pico presents what should be worthy of admiration in philosophers or what should be the philosopher's qualities:

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[192] Bausi [ed.], *Filosofia o eloquenza*… p. 42: "Est elegans res (fatemur hoc) facundia plena illecebrae et voluptatis, sed in philosopho nec decora, nec grata. Quis mollem incessum, argutas manus, ludibundos oculos in histrione et saltatore non probet? In cive, in philosopho, quis non improbet, arguat, abominetur?"

[193] *Ibid.*, p. 44: "Sicyonios calceos habiles aptosque ad pedem dicebat Socrates, sed Socrati non convenire. Omnino non eadem ratio civilis habitus et philosophici, sicuti neque mensae neque sermonis: utitur his philosophus dumtaxat ad necessitatem, utitur civilis homo etiam ad gratiam, quam et hic, si neglexerit, non civilis, et ille, si affectaverit, non erit philosophus." In the last passage, we had *civis* and *philosophus*. Here we have *civilis homo* who has to obtain popular favour. This does not necessarily mean one of the rulers of the state, but it must mean someone who takes an active part in politics; hence my translation 'man of state'. This expression, *homo civilis*, is a translation of the Greek noun πολιτικός, where the original expression was πολιτικὸς ἀνήρ. Could the Latin idiom exist in Latin translations from the Greek known to Pico?

[194] *Ibid.*, p. 46: "Quaerimus nos quid nam scribamus, non quaerimus quomodo; immo quomodo quaerimus, ut scilicet sine pompa et flore ullo orationis, quam nolumus ut delectabilis, venusta et faceta sit, sed ut utilis, gravis et reverenda, ut maiestatem potius ex horrore, quam gratiam ex mollitudine consequatur. Non expectamus theatri plausum, quod aures demulserit aequabilis clausula vel numerosa, quod hoc sit falsum, illud sit lepidum; sed expectamus paucorum potius prae admiratione silentium, introspicientium penitius aliquid aut de naturae adytis erutum, aut de caelestium, de Iovis aula ad homines adductum, tum vel aliquid ita argutum ut defendendi, ita defensum ut arguendi non sit locus."

> Besides let them admire us for being acute in searching, circumspect in exploring, subtle in contemplating, severe in judging, complex in binding, easy in unfolding. Let them admire in us the brevity of style, the fruitfulness of many great things, the most remote opinions [expressed] in accessible words full of questions, full of answers. How well prepared, how well instructed we are, to remove ambiguities, to dilute anxieties, to unfold obscure things, by using compelling syllogisms both to refute false things and to confirm true things.[195]

The only commitment of the philosopher is to the truth, and the truth can be pursued in a simple style. Yet Pico says explicitly that even the philosopher with his sagacity, subtlety, and compelling syllogisms, can only persuade people to accept the truth. It is the words of Scripture, however crude and rustic they may appear, which really force themselves on us and transform our whole personality.[196]

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[195] *Ibid.*: "Admirentur praeterea nos sagaces in inquirendo, circumspectos in explorando, subtiles in contemplando, in iudicando graves, implicitos in vinciendo, faciles in enodando. Admirentur in nobis brevitatem styli, foetam rerum multarum atque magnarum; sub expositis verbis remotissimas sententias, plenas quaestionum, plenas solutionum; quam apti sumus, quam bene instructi ambiguitates tollere, scrupos diluere, involuta evoluere, flexianimis syllogismis et infirmare falsa et vera confirmare."

[196] *Ibid.*, p. 52: "Dic, quaeso, quid movet fortius et persuadet quam Sacrarum lectio Literarum? Non movent, non persuadent, sed cogunt, agitant, vim inferunt Legis rudia verba et agrestia, sed viva, sed animata, flammea, aculeata, ad imum spiritum penetrantia, hominem totum potestate mirabili tranformantia." Ann Moss' argument regarding the two concurrent Latin idioms, one of the scholastic theologians and one of the humanists, in her *Renaissance Truth*… (especially on the Pico-Barbaro correspondence and its context see pp. 64–86) is relevant here. But while in the letter to Barbaro, Pico attacks the humanist style and praises the scholastic style of the philosophers, by using the same humanist style (Moss on pp. 68–69 regards it as a version of the liar paradox which is problematic, since the liar paradox has to do with self-referential statements), in the *Apology* Pico adopts the Parisian style to attack the members of the papal commission, i.e., scholastic theologians, by using their own style and on their own philosophical ground. But, as we have seen, this is not the only level of Latin in the *Apology*. In his rhetoric against those theologians Pico uses technical terminology of the ancient skeptical Academy, a result of his humanist education and reading of Cicero's philosophical works as well as of Augustine. Thus, the contrast here is not between scholastic technical philosophical language, and humanist classical rhetoric and style, but rather, the humanist style itself also involved technical philosophical terminology, originating from an ancient philosophical school. Such a picture is much more complicated, in both the scholastic and the humanist Latin, than described by Moss. Moss assumes (on p. 69) separate contexts for the two Latin tongues while in fact the historical context of the late fifteenth century debates suggest one common context, in which both scholastics and humanists participated. The so-called "scholastic language" was changing in the last decades of the fifteenth century under some influence of the humanist educational paradigm, as well as internal changes of both style and contents, as the case of Adrian of Utrecht, discussed in

In Pico's contrast between rhetoric and philosophy, an important modification can be traced in one of the humanist ideals in the last decades of the fifteenth century. While Bruni chose Pericles as a model, Pico chooses Socrates; Socrates becomes a representative of truth and simplicity.[197] The philosopher's way of life is much more persuasive than the orator's nice words, and so are the truth of the matter, the seriousness of his speech, and the virtuous nature of the philosopher; Pico cites here Lactantius and Heraclitus.[198] Pico's arguments in this letter can be described as anti-rhetorical rhetoric; the style and rhetorical ornaments simply do not count in philosophy; so, there cannot be any contrast between eloquence and wisdom, words and hearts.[199]

M.W.F. Stone's 'Adrian of Utrecht and the University of Leuven: Theology and the Discussion of Moral Problems in the Late Fifteenth Century', in *Traditio* 61 (2006), pp. 247–287 suggests. On the other hand, Poliziano was more interested in logic and philosophy in the last stages of his academic career, as shown by Jonathan Hunt's *Politian and Scholastic Logic*… What we need are many more detailed analyses of texts (many of which are still available only in manuscript form or in early printed editions) which present the tensions between these two groups of intellectuals, before we will be able to present more general arguments regarding a cultural break. We still have to be careful not to fall into some modern scholarly anachronistic preconceptions regarding humanism and scholasticism. Thus, the dynamic and complicated relations between scholastics and humanists cannot be easily interpreted in modern terms such as the "linguistic turn". And see also David A. Lines, 'Humanism and the Italian Universities', in Celenza and Gouwens [eds.], *Humanism and Creativity*… pp. 327–346.

[197] *Ibid.*: "Periclis orationibus elaboratis et luculentis nihil se commoveri inquit Alcibiades, sed Socratis verbis nudis et simplicibus…"

[198] *Ibid.*: "Tribus maxime persuadetur, vita dicendis, veritate rei, sobrietate orationis. Haec sunt, Lactanti, quae philosopho fidem conciliabunt: si bonus fuerit, si veridicus, si id genus dicendi appetens, quod non ex amoenis Musarum silvis, sed ex horrendo fluxerit antro, in quo dixit Heraclitus latitare veritatem." Fragments 8M=123DK, 14M=93DK are the most proper candidates, but none fits exactly what Pico has. Did he have an intermediate source? Something like Democritus in Cicero, *Lucullus* 32: "naturam accusa, quae in profundo veritatem… penitus abstruserit"? But see also Bausi's remarks and further refrences on p. 118.

[199] *Ibid.*, pp. 58–60: "Verum enimvero iam te loco meliore statuo: do tibi eloquentiam et sapientiam mutuo nexu invicem conspirasse. Abiunxerunt philosophi sapientiam ab eloquentia; abiunxerunt historici, rhetores, poetas—quod deflet Philostratus—eloquentiam a sapientia. Hos tu victuros celebri fama minime dubitas, illos non nisi in poenam et contumeliam. Vide quid agas; indisertam mavult Cicero [*De oratore* III, 112] prudentiam quam stultam loquacitatem. Non quaerimus in pecunia quae moneta percussa sit, sed qua materia constet. Nec est qui purum aurum non malit habere sub nota Teutonum, quam sub Romano symbolo factitium. Peccant qui dissidium cordis et linguae faciunt; sed qui excordes, toti sunt lingua, nonne sunt mera, ut Cato [ap. Gell. *NA* 18, 7, 3] ait, mortuaria glosaria? Vivere sine lingua possumus, forte non commode; sed sine corde nullo modo possumus. Non est humanus qui sit insolens pollitioris lit-

Pico's devotion to philosophy as a lifelong occupation is represented in a letter dated October 15, 1486, written in Perugia and addressed to his friend Andrea Corneo.[200] In this letter Pico replies to a letter from Corneo, in which Corneo tried to encourage Pico to make some practical use of his philosophical learning. Pico first defends philosophy from its bad image as a discipline of no value unless it can lead to an active political life; and he regrets the expectation that leaders should only have a taste of philosophy for their general education, or for the sake of showing off their knowledge. Thus he is not willing to turn philosophical learning into some temporary stage during the training of an educated man, a view of philosophy implied in Corneo's letter, and well attested in ancient Latin sources.[201]

What we have here is a different attitude from that of the so-called civic humanists of the first third of the century, more philosophical and with an anti-rhetorical attitude, but nevertheless this attitude does not put itself in opposition to the proper activity of men of state.

Pico maintains that philosophy is not a trade but rather a whole way of life.[202] The critical tone in Pico's words is directed at the fact that most humanists had to trade their knowledge for subsistence; most of them simply did not have Pico's σχολή. But nevertheless Pico represents an important shift in the humanist movement towards the centrality of philosophy as an autonomous field which could remain effective only through keeping its autonomy. Philosophy should no longer be regarded as merely an essential stage in the *curriculum* of learned men but rather as a way of life.

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eraturae; non est homo qui sit expers philosophiae." See Bausi's remarks and further refrences on pp. 123–126.

[200] Pico, *Opera omnia*… pp. 376–379.

[201] *Ibid.*, p. 377: "Adhortaris me tu ad actuosam vitam et civilem, frustra me et in ignominiam quasi, ac contumeliam tam diu philosophatum dicens, nisi tandem in agendarum tractandarumque rerum palaestra desudem. Et equidem mi Andrea oleum operamque meorum studiorum perdidissem, si ita essem nunc animatus, ut hac tibi parte accedere et assentiri possem. Exitialis haec illa est et monstrosa persuasio, quae hominum mentes invasit, aut non esse philosophiae studia viris principibus attingenda, aut summis labiis ad pompam potius ingenii, quam animi cultum vel ociose etiam delibenda." *Viri principes* is not necessarily the same as *viri civiles* who are active in politics. It may mean people in Pico's social position, or simply distinguished people. For ancient sources see Cicero, *Lucullus* 4–6; Tacitus, *Agricola* 4.

[202] *Ibid.*: "Ergo illiberalem, aut non omnino principis erit non mercennarium facere studium sapientiae. Quis aequo animo haec aut ferat aut audiat? Certe nunquam philosophatus est, qui ideo philosophatus est, ut aliquando aut possit, aut nolit philosophari. Mercaturam exercuit ille, non philosophiam."

Like Pico's attitude to everything else, his attitude to philosophy has many sides. His statements concerning philosophy as a lifelong occupation, not merely a preparation for a more 'normal' practical life, sound genuine enough. After all, he devoted his life to theory and contemplation. A man in his social position would have found it easy to engage in political activity if he had wanted to do so: in fact, this is what Andrea Corneo tried to persuade him to do. Pico's idea that philosophy seeks the truth, that it can persuade people of the truth, but final truth can be achieved only in religion, is in itself not new, although his formulation of the relation between philosophical and theological *opiniones* and scriptural *infallibilis veritas*, however much it draws on previous sources, is his own. That Scripture is the only source of infallible truth is an idea which he takes from Augustine. But his treatment both of philosophical opinions and especially of the opinions of most theologians as *probabilia*, as well as his use of the old skeptical argument from *dissensio philosophorum* in its application also to the writings of Doctors of the Church, is his own. In such cases, verbal echoes of Cicero and his explicit testimony for his own abandonment of Aristotle to the Academy are evidence of the use he made—perhaps for the first time in Renaissance philosophy in a theological context and in such a philosophical manner—of some of the methods of the skeptical Academy. One should, however, remember that Pico was never a devoted follower of any school. He makes use of Academic techniques and practices in the larger framework of his new theology. There is an absolute truth, and this is found in Scripture.

Excursus: A Note on Probability in Pico's Apologia and in the Mediaeval and in Early Modern Tradition

The issue of probability is very broad, and touches on many problems in the history of philosophy, theology, and science. It is not my intention here to provide anything like an exhaustive account of the various terms for probability and their context. I shall only indicate briefly some of them, in order to distinguish between the use of such terms in their mediaeval and in their early modern contexts, on the one hand, and Pico's use of some of them under the influence of the skeptical Academy, on the other.

In the mediaeval tradition the practice of using probable arguments was a mere tool, while the truth itself was assumed to be known. Pico's

use of *probabile*, following the tradition of the Academy, does not assume that the truth is already known. The Academic skeptic takes it for granted that there is a truth about the world, the gods, man, and society, but that so far no philosopher has found the proper criterion which would anable us to establish the truth. He therefore develops his own tools for reaching conclusions which would enable him to reach what seems to be the most convincing positions, and he adopts even these positions only for the time being. Pico, as a Christian, does accept a whole area of theology as embodying an incontrovertible truth, but he restricts this area to what we find in Scripture and in the Creed, and in some of the more authoritative Church Fathers, and excludes from it the views of later theologians and philosophers. In this area—the theological and philosophical views of most of the Fathers and all the later Christian theologians—what we have is only a variety of *opiniones*, and it is here that Pico applies the Academic criterion of *probabilitas* to the process of sorting out such human and fallible opinions.

The mediaeval tradition of theological disputations, involving issues such as academic freedom and the censorship exercised both by university and Church authority, is described in an article by William J. Courtenay from 1989.[203] According to this article, the mediaeval tradition regarded philosophical and theological theses as open to discussion:

> At least a decade or more before 1340, both at Paris and in England, candidates were required to take an oath immediately before entering upon the reading of the *Sentences* and immediately before inception. One effect was to protect the bachelor and future master by publicy declaring his intention not to teach anything contrary to the faith and not to argue questionable theses *pertinaciter* or *assertive* but only *disputabile* (that is, for reasons of academic discussion). It also formed the legal grounds for prosecuting those who, in the eyes of their academic superiors, broke their oath.[204]

One should note, however, that *disputabile* is not the same as *probabile*, and using presuppositions which appear to be heretical as a tool for developing the dialectical skill of young theologians[205] is very different

[203] William J. Courtenay, 'Inquiry and Inquisition: Academic Freedom in Medieval Universities', in *Church History* 58 (1989, No. 2), pp. 168–181.

[204] *Ibid.*, p. 179.

[205] *Ibid.*, p. 181. The scholastic dialectic developed in the form of *quaestio disputata* is very different from Pico's approach discussed in this chapter. For some discussions of this mediaeval form see Bernardo C. Bazàn, John F. Wippel, Gérard Fransen, and

from Pico's *probabile*, which was part of his new method of doing theology.

Turning to the Renaissance and early modern period, it appears that the theological implications of the employment of probable arguments have not received from historians the attention that they deserve. A number of scholars have, however, discussed the humanists' relation to

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Danielle Jacquart, *Les questions disputées et les questions quodlibétiques dans les facultés de théologie, de droit et de médecine* (Louvain 1985), especially the first two parts, by Bernardo C. Bazàn and John F. Wippel, on pp. 15–222; John Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy (1150–1350). An Introduction* (London 1987), especially pp. 27–34. This new dialectic of the *quaestio* was based on the *logica nova*, which was developed after 1132, in the writings of Adam of Balsham. It was based on new sources such as *Prior Analytics, Sophistici Elenchi, Topics*, and also *Posterior Analytics*, which replaced the *logica vetus*, based on Aristotle's *Categories* and *De Interpretatione*, Porphyry's *Isagoge*, and on the commentaries of Boethius; see Bazàn, *Les questions disputées*… pp. 25–31; Lawn, *The Rise and Decline* … pp. 10–11; Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy*… pp. 35–36. Thus, this dialectic was based on the more limited sources which were known and read before the fifteenth century and the philosophical Renaissance (which included, as we have seen in both Ficino and Pico, the using of new sources and the developing of new philosophical humanistic approaches based on these relativly new philosophical literature). The fact that we can find the term *probabile* for instance, in some mediaeval sources, including Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, and William of Ockham, derived from many classical, late classical and patristic sources, does not imply the technical Academic use of this term we find in Pico's *Apologia*. On the other hand, Pico's discussion in the *Apologia* does not include a part of *determinatio quaestionis*, in which he proves the right opinion and refutes the wrong one. Such a part was essential in the traditional *quaestio disputata* in the University of Paris; see Palémon Glorieux, 'La disputa teologica all'università di Parigi', in L. Bianchi and E. Randi [eds.], *Filosofi e teologi. La ricerca e l'insegnamento nell'università medievale* (Bergamo 1989), pp. 153–168; especially p. 156: "La *discussio* ha svolto la propria funzione di esercizio, di allenamento dialettico. Ma la disputa deve anche garantire il progresso del pensiero, condurre ad un approfondimento dei problemi sollevati. Il maestro deve assicurarsene. Lo fa riprendendo, nel primo giorno successivo di lezione, le linee essenziali della discussione, e "determinandola", portando la propria risposta al problema; non più quella di un baccelliere o di un contraddittore, ma quella che il maestro personalmente sostiene, insieme alle ragioni che la fondano." See also Olga Weijers, 'La terminologia delle nascenti università. Studio sul vocabolario utilizzato dalla nuova istituzione', in Bianchi and Randi [eds.], *Filosofi e teologi*… pp. 81–107; especially p. 88: "Per spiegare il termine occorre ricorrere ad un altro senso di "determinatio", che pure riguarda l'insegnamento universitario: vale a dire la conclusione pubblica di un professore dopo una "disputatio". "Determinare" in questo senso vuol dire dare la sintesi degli argomenti e determinare, vale a dire dirimere la questione nella conclusione finale di chi ha presieduto alla "disputatio". An example of *determinatio quaestionis* can be found in Vincenzzo Bandello's critique of Ficino, in Kristeller, *Le thomisme et la pensée italienne*… pp. 217–243. Thus, Gordon Leff's remarks in his *Medieval Thought*… pp. 271 and 288, are still relevant for pointing out the differences between fourteenth century's scholastic theology and fifteenth century humanist theology.

ancient skepticism, but mainly in the context of the intensive preoccupation with ancient rhetoric and the criticism of scholastic philosophy.

Lisa Jardine in an article from 1983[206] suggests a conection between Valla and the tradition of the skeptical Academy, which Valla regards as one of the sources of his dialectic and of his attitude to rhetoric. One should note, however, that Valla's dialectic is directed not towards the examination of philosophical and theological opinions, but towards a wholesale rejection of the use of philosophical methods in religious discussions. This is a far cry from Pico's employment of the academic approach.

Victoria Kahn, in her 1985 book,[207] brings out the influence of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Ethics*, as well as Cicero's rhetorical works, on the establishment by humanists such as Salutati, Pontano, Valla, and Erasmus, of an area of probability controlled by prudence in its ancient sense. In this area, the dialectical syllogism, which is not apodictic, has its proper place:

> The degree of truth that Aristotle then claims for the conclusion of the dialectical syllogism thus depends on the assumption that common opinion or consensus corresponds in some degree to the truth.[208]

Aristotle, as Kahn maintains, regarded with approval that contingent area of common opinions, an area in which persuasion and action take place. Cicero, according to Kahn,[209] draws a connection between the orator and Academic skepticism, since, according to the Academic skeptic, man is incapable of reaching an absolute knowledge, and is always restricted to the contingent and the probable, which is exactly the area of rhetoric. For all its merits, however, Kahn's book does not discuss the Florentine humanists of the second half of the *Quattrocento*, and her book contains no discussion of any theological uses or implications of the influence of the skeptical Academy.

Guido Morpurgo-Tagliabue, in his 1981 book,[210] regarded the issue of hypothetical arguments as central to the Galilean problem. This led Morpurgo-Tagliabue to a discussion of the epistemological status

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[206] Lisa Jardine, 'Lorenzo Valla: Academic Skepticism and the New Humanist Dialectic', in Myles Burnyeat [ed], *The Skeptical Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1983), pp. 253–286.

[207] Victoria Kahn, *Rhetoric*… especially pp. 29–46.

[208] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[209] *Ibid.*, pp. 35–36.

[210] Guido Morpurgo-Tagliabue, *I processi di Galileo e l'epistemologia.* I am using the Rome 1981 revised reprint of the original edition, Milan 1963.

in mediaeval thought of arguments and theories which are expressed *hypothetice*, and those which are expressed *realiter*. He detects in classical, mediaeval, and later texts a distinction between hypothetical discourse and absolute discourse, between *parlare ex suppositione* and *parlare assolutamente*.[211] This enabled Morpurgo-Tagliabue to regard Copernicus' theory of the earth's movement as a mere hypothesis which saves the phenomena better than the epicyclical hypothesis, thus avoiding any theological implications, since what we have is a mere mathematical hypothesis rather than an argument concerning reality.

Morpurgo-Tagliabue refers to two different attitudes to hypothesis in the classical and mediaeval tradition. The first tradition dates back to Aristotle, who distinguished between a proper apodictic demonstration which leads to absolute knowledge, and hypothetical demonstration, which is based on supposition and leads to different degrees of probability. Ptolemy in his astronomical disquisition follows such a hypothetical method. On the basis of this method, the distinction between *hypothetice* and *realiter* was established,[212] by the commentators on Aristotle and Ptolemy. The second tradition originated in Neoplatonism, and it therefore influenced the conceptions of knowledge and science in late mediaeval and Renaissance thought. In this tradition there is an unbridgeable gap between hypothesis and proper demonstration.[213] A *suppositio* can be verified only when it is based on one of the general principles of Aristotelian physics such as simplicity, harmony, and order. According to this tradition, we can have even opposite hypotheses, both of which able to be regarded as probable; and a hypothesis becomes more probable according to the greater number of phenomena which it saves without abondoning the general principles of physics.[214] Thus, following the Thomistic interpretation of Aristotle, astronomical hypotheses are mathematical conventions concerning the movements of the planets. As long as science does not contradict these hypotheses, one of them may be preferred, yet none of them is absolute, and one can always offer new hypotheses. Such hypotheses are not false, but rather

[211] *Ibid.*, p. 38. I can give one example of this from Steel [ed.], *Proclus*… p. 31: " … et sic utique facere secundum modum inquisitionem, aliam ypothesim sumentes *superiorum optimam, donec* utique per hos gradus progrediens, *ad aliquid sufficiens venias*, ipsum utique dicens quod anypothetum (idest insuppositum) et quod est non secundum suppositionem principium eorum que ostenduntur, sed secundum veritatem."

[212] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[213] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[214] *Ibid.*, pp. 48–49.

possible and probable. Their uncertain nature follows from the fact that they are demonstrated *per accidens*, and thus their necessity is hypothetical.[215]

Pico's use of *probabile*, *veri simile* and the like, on the other hand, is unencumbered by Aristotelian physics and by the use of concepts such as *suppositiones* and hypothesis, since his context is completely different. He is not concerned with the degree in probability of mathematical, astronomical, and other scientific theories and hypotheses. Nor is he interested in the reality or lack of it of abstract entities. He employs the procedures of the skeptical Academy for the examination of philosophical and theological opinions which were regarded by various theologians in Pico's day as true dogmas, but which he regards as opinions whose probability should be examined. In this respect, his employment of such methods is closer to that of the skeptical Academics themselves.

We shall move on now from the more speculative and theoretical dimensions of this Florentine humanist theology discussed in the last two chapters back to a consideration of some practical aspects, represented by the Dominican friar and preacher Girolamo Savonarola.

[215] *Ibid.*, pp. 52–53.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SAVONAROLA AFFAIR—THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD AS REPUBLICAN PRACTICE

1. *The Savonarola Affair: A Case-Study in the History and in the Historiography of the Renaissance*

The historical figure of Savonarola is related inseparably to the religious, social, political, and intellectual history of Florence during the 1490s. But the events he was involved in and conducted could be better understood, as I have argued in the previous chapters, through the notions of a deep spiritual, theological, and political crisis on the one hand, and the evolution of a new humanist theology, which was the reaction to this crisis, on the other. The understanding of this background, I claim, is essential for a historical understanding of the Savonarola affair. The equation *diluvium* vs *concordia* we find in the rhetorical exercises of Ficino's students during the 1470s (see chapter two) represented a state of crisis in which there are only two extreme options: total destruction or perfect harmony. Savonarola offers against this *diluvium* a whole renovation of the religious and the political life of the Florentine city-state. He was not willing to be satisfied with a moderate reform such as Caroli's in the early 1460s, discussed in the first chapter, focusing on the Mendicant Orders and the monastic life of the friars, and using, just like the above-mentioned speakers, the ancient Roman republic as a model for conducting both religious and political institutions. Starting with such a moderate reform of his monastery San Marco in the early 1490s, he soon realized that it was not enough in order to deal with the deep spiritual crisis he felt Florentine society was facing. On this point he became very close to Ficino's notion of the spiritual crisis, represented both in his *De Christiana religione* of 1474 and in his *Praedicationes*. If, as I have argued in chapter three, *De Christiana religione* should be regarded as the "manifesto" of this new humanist theology, then Savonarola, I shall argue in this chapter, represents the practical actualization of this "manifesto" and of the humanist theology on a practical, both political and religious,

level. In other words, Savonarola represents humanist theology turned into action.[1]

The Savonarola affair, I shall argue in this section, can be used as a good case-study for criticizing the different basic attitudes towards the whole epoch, which stands between mediaeval culture and modernity. The question who was Savonarola, a narrow-minded Dominican preacher, a late relic of the 'dark' Middle Ages who overshadowed the brightness of Renaissance Florence, or a representative of the true spirit of the Renaissance and almost a national hero, has been discussed in the historiography at least since the mid-nineteenth century, but it has its roots even earlier, and in fact, it was part of the public dispute—for or against the preacher—held in Florence during the mid 1490s.[2]

Of the man who stands at the centre of the political events which took place in Florence between 1494–1498, the Dominican friar and preacher Girolamo Savonarola, we have many biographies.[3] After the

[1] Thus, as I shall try to show in this chapter, the Savonarola affair cannot be regarded as "a simple revival of the Thomistic project" contrasted to Ficino's critical approach to the religious and political life in Florence, as described in Hankins, *Plato* … vol. 1, p. 290. The contrast between Ficino and Savonarola (and Pico in the middle) regarding their different vision of Christianity is also emphasized by Allen in his *Synoptic Art*… p. 146: "No wonder that such a "pagan" perspective [Ficino's] raised the ire of Savonarola who demanded its repudiation. While Pico, however, was swept away by the Dominican's zeal while still in his twenties, the older Ficino, who was in some respects the more circumspect and cautious of the two thinkers, remained nevertheless steadfatly committed to a very different vision of Christianity than Savonarola's unaccommodating fideism." In this chapter I shall introduce a more complex perspective of Savonarola, his vision, and his relations with the intellectual and political life in Florence. The many accounts of the Florentine chronicles regarding the relations with, and the influence of, Savonarola on the humanists (including both Ficino and Pico) on the one hand, and Ficino's own *Apologia* of 1498, the *Apologia contra Savonarolam* in Paul Oskar Kristeller [ed.], *Supplementum Ficinianum*, 2 vols. (Firenze 1937), vol. 2, pp. 76–79 [why, if Ficino was indeed always so contrasted to Savonarola, as Allen argues, did he write this apology, where we find, on p. 76, the confession: "… quod hypocrita Ferrariensis unus tot Florentinos viros alioquin ingeniosos eruditosque integro ferme lustri cursu deceperit"] on the other, are among the evidences which suggest a different perspective. Thus, Weinstein's observation regarding the relations between Ficino and Savonarola seems to me much more in line with the historical evidences; see, Weinstein, *Savonarola*… p. 186: "Yet the vehemence of Ficino's attack is that of a disillusioned believer rather than the dispassionate analysis of a skeptical bystander like Machiavelli."

[2] See e.g., Weinstein, *Savonarola*… pp. 227–246; Polizzotto, *The Elect*… pp. 54–94.

[3] See e.g., 'Epistola di Fra Placido Cinozzi', in P. Villari and E. Casanova [eds.], *Scelta di prediche e scritti di Fra Girolamo Savonarola con nuovi documenti intorno alla sua vita* (Firenze 1898), pp. 3–28, a biographical letter which is the earliest document regarding Savonatola's life; Piero Ginori Conti [ed.], *La Vita del Beato Ieronimo Savonarola, scritta da*

failure of his first sermons delivered in Florence and its surroundings between 1482–1487,[4] Savonarola left the city, to return in 1490, after he gained some experience as a preacher. In August 1490 he returned to the pulpit of San Marco.[5] His improved style and message were now stimulating the Florentines, and he became one of the most popular preachers in the city.[6] In his new status as a popular preacher he became a threat to other popular preachers, such as the Augustinian father Mariano da Genazzano, who was close to the Medici. In addition, Savonarola's critique of the Florentine government had become more popular and, obviously, it was not favoured by Lorenzo de' Medici. This was the background for Mariano's attack on Savonarola.[7]

In July 1491 Savonarola was elected prior of the convent of San Marco.[8] His behaviour as a prior demonstrated that he was not pleased with the patronage of the Medici which San Marco had enjoyed since

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un anonimo del secolo 16 e gia attribuita a fra Pacifico Burlamacchi (Firenze 1937), a relatively late biography by an unknown author who used the biography by Giovanfrancesco Pico as indicated on p. 12. This biography is a version in the vernacular of the *Vita Latina*, an earlier Latin biography written by an anonymous friar from San Marco; parts of Giovanfrancesco Pico's biography were published by Gian Carlo Garfagnini, 'La Vita Savonarolae di Gianfrancesco Pico', in *Rinascimento* 36 (1996), pp. 62–72. For the Latin version see Elisabetta Schisto [ed.], *Vita Hieronymi Savonarolae* (Città di Castello 1999). For the vernacular version of this biography by an anonymous author, see Raffaella Castagnola [ed.], *Vita di Hieronimo Savonarola* (Firenze 1998); see also the detailed discussion by Júlia Benavent, 'Las biografías antiguas de fra Girolamo Savonarola—el códice de Valencia', in *Memorie Domenicane* 32 (2001), pp. 63–216. We have also three classic moderm biographies: Pasquale Villari, *La storia di Girolamo Savonarola e de'suoi tempi*, 2 vols. (Firenze 1859–1861); Joseph Schnitzer, *Savonarola*, 2 vols., translated by Ernesto Rutili (Milano 1931); Roberto Ridolfi, *Vita di Girolamo Savonarola*, 2 vols. (Roma 1952). These three biographies were written out of great empathy for Savonarola, but they still follow the historical method. A more recent biography, from an opposite point of view, written by Franco Cordero, *Savonarola*, 4 vols. (Bari 1986–1988), suffers from the personal involvement of its author, who does not always follow the historical method. On this biography and other historiographical issues in regard to Savonarola, see Donald Weinstein, 'Hagiography, Demonology, Biography: Savonarola Studies Today', in *Journal of Modern History* 63 (September 1991), pp. 492–498. See also, more recently, Weinstein's 'A Man For All Seasons: Girolamo Savonarola, the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation', in Donald Weinstein, Júlia Benavent, and Inés Rodríguez [eds.], *La figura de Jerónimo Savonarola O.P. y su influencia en españa y europa* (Firenze 2004), pp. 3–21.

[4] 'Epistola di Fra Placido Cinozzi'… p. 11.

[5] Ridolfi, *Vita*… vol. 1, pp. 43–48.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 50–52.

[7] 'Epistola di Fra Placido Cinozzi'… p. 14.

[8] Ridolfi, *Vita*… vol. 1, p. 66.

1436. He did not visit Lorenzo after being elected, and did not greet him when he visited the convent.[9] This behaviour was part of Savonarola's planned reform for San Marco, which included the better realization of the Mendicant ideal of poverty.[10] Not least, such behaviour also represented the growing tension between the preacher and the Florentine government which was in the hands of the Medici. This tension was about to reach its culmination in 1494.

The Florentine chroniclers[11] agree as to the dramatic moment in which Savonarola became a central figure in the political life of the city. This moment occurs when the divine punishment described in Savonarola's sermons was identified with a real threat: Charles VIII (1470–1498), king of France. Charles, who tried to fulfill the dreams regarding a reunion of the Christian empire, a part of a general spiritual and political reform, carried out his threats and invaded Italy in 1494.[12] It seems that the apocalyptic descriptions contained in Savonarola's sermons were about to take place in Florence, and the preacher was summoned to help the city. Thus he joined the delegation to Charles—who was just about entering Florence.

The idea of summonning Savonarola was raised and discussed in a consultative meeting. Cerretani, who delivers the words of Piero Capponi, gives us an indication regarding some of the reasons for this and of the general opinion regarding the preacher:

> And above all it seems to me [necessary] to send, as one of the orators [in the delegation], Fra Girolamo vicar of San Marco, a man of sacred life and customs, brave, valiant, pragmatic, and of great reputation; and what seems to me most necessary is that we set out immediately.[13]

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[9] Conti [ed.], *La Vita*… pp. 24–25.

[10] Schnitzer, *Savonarola*… vol. I, p. 137.

[11] Parenti, *Storia*…; Schnitzer [ed.], *Quellen*…; Landucci, *Diario*…; Cerretani, *Storia*…; Nardi, *Istoria*…; Cambi, *Istorie*…; Rinuccini, *Riccordi storici*…

[12] According to Cerretani, *Storia*… p. 197, the French army invaded the Florentine territory on October 26 and conquered Serezanello, Serezana, and Pietrasancta.

[13] Cerretani, *Storia*… p. 199: "… et sopratutto mi pare si manddi per uno degl'oratori fra Girolamo vichario di S. Marco, huomo di sancta vita et costumi et animoso et valente et praticho et di gran fama, et quel che sopra ogni altra cosa mi pare necessaria si e che partino prestissimamente."

Savonarola was regarded a man who lived a sacred life and whose costums and behaviour were immaculate.[14] But it is important to notice that the friar and preacher, prior of San Marco, is also considered a practical man (*praticho*). This is an essential characteristic, and I shall discuss it in the next section. Beside these characteristics and qualities, Savonarola enjoyed a great reputation which could assist Florence's delicate negotiations with the king. Savonarola gained this reputation due to his prophetic and apocalyptic sermons on Noah's ark, which were now regarded as true prophecies,[15] and he seems to be the dominant figure in the delegation to Charles.[16] His reputation and authority should serve as counterbalance to Piero de' Medici's mistaken diplomacy; it should also give the Florentine government the authority which it seems to be constantly lacking.[17] It is important to notice that, despite

[14] He is described as someone who came from a low social rank but who was gifted with unusual talent and education; see Cerretani, *Storia*… p. 192: "… grandiximo d'ingegno et di scientia…" His style was regarded as new; see *ibid*.: "… introduxe quasi nuovo modo di pronuntiare il verbo d'Iddio…" Of great influence were Savonarola's sermons on the book of Genesis, delivered between 1491–1494; see Schnitzer, *Savonarola* … vol. 1, p. 100. In these sermons Savonarola presented a symbolic interpretation of Noah's ark and the flood. Unfortunately we do not have the autographs or any copy of these sermons but only two sixteenth century printed editions which have many defects. For the textual history of Savonarola's sermons on the book of Genesis and on Noah's ark see Roberto Ridolfi, *Studi savonaroliani* (Firenze 1935), pp. 83–114. These sermons influenced also the humanists; see Cerretani, *Storia*… p. 193: "Alle quali prediche chonchorsse molto popolo et molti valentissimi huomini, tra'quali era messere Marsilio Ficino messere Uliveri Arduini messere Malatesta da Rimino et Girolamo di ser Paolo Benivieni philosophi et theologi prestantissimi, el conte Ihoanni de la Mirandola doctissimo de' suo tempi et molti altri homini singhulari et di gran virtu, et con non picola amiratione udivano esso afermare essere mandato da dDio et non mancho la sua inaudita scientia." See also Armando F. Verde and Elettra Giaconi, 'I *sermones super Genesim* del Savonarola e le *praedicationes super Genesim* del codice Gondi', in *Memorie Domenicane* 30 (1999), pp. 279–306.

[15] Cerretani, *Storia*… p. 200: "… et molto piu che avanti fra Girolamo si partissi haveva predichato in S. Liperata, et havendo a l'entrata del re di Francia in Italia apunto chiuso l'archa chon tantto terrore spavento et grida et piantti, haveva facto alchune prediche che ciaschuno quasi semivivo sanza parlare per la cipta sbighotiti s'agiravano."

[16] *Ibid*., p. 201: "Tra tantti timori e pericholi gl'oratori nostri, giuntti e rapresentatisi davanti al re, frate Girolamo, uno de'sei oratori, venuto al comspecto di sua maesta parlo in questa forma…"

[17] The events of May 1493 are a good indication of the weakness and hesitancy of the Florentine government and its leader Piero de' Medici. The public demand aroused by the preacher Domenico da Ponzo for permitting the exiled preacher Bernardino da Feltre to return to Florence had forced the Florentine government to change its decision. Parenti, who describes Domenico's sermon, expresses a common sentiment regarding the government; see Parenti, *Storia*… p. 49: "E cosi predico, semplicemente

Piero's diplomacy against Charles, the king approved his authority and stood, at first, against the popular government; Savonarola's authority was essential in the negotiations with the king, and the popular government needed it. Savonarola was thus regarded as the defender of the Florentine republic, and of the popular reform, in front of Charles.[18]

After the king left Florence, the Florentine popular government led the political reform approved by Savonarola. The chroniclers express a public opinion that Savonarola was involved in the new legislative initiatives[19] and that he gave his full support to the reform and stood against its opponents.[20] The idea of establishing a Great Council according to the Venetian model was approved by Savonarola and it seems that he influenced the magistrates.[21] This fact is criticized by the chronicler, who states that governing a city is different from governing a convent.[22] By this remark the chronicler gives us an indication of Savonarola's political authority and of his public status in the city. His political involvement and status are evident when, after the elections of December 1494, he delivered a sermon in the *palazzo della Signoria* in which he supported the reform; his position was approved by the decision on the reform and its legal approval, in December 22 and 23, by the assemblies of the people and of the commune.[23]

All these formal and legal procedures gained Savonarola's approval; he spoke on behalf of the common good and enforced the authority of the *Signoria* among the people.[24] The aim was to restore the *Signoria*'s

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e santamente, con moltitudine di persone piu che 10 mila: segno evidentissimo di debolezza dello stato."

[18] These are Savonarola's words, imploring the king not to injure the Florentines, delivered by Cerretani, *Storia*… p. 202: "… et maximo verso lo inocente et buon popolo fiorentino al quale non farai lesione o violenza alcuna, tu o tuo gentte, che cosi piacerlli t'affermo et per sua parte ti dicho." The chroniclers indicate that the stormy events which took place in Florence quickly and without much injury ended thanks to Savonarola, who is described as the man who saved the city and struggled for its freedom. See e.g., Parenti, *Storia*… pp. 145–147; Landucci, *Diario*… pp. 87–88; Cerretani, *Storia*… p. 220.

[19] Landucci, *Diario*… p. 94.

[20] Cerretani, *Storia*… p. 223.

[21] Parenti, *Storia*… pp. 158–159. On the important political and social implications of the reform of December 23, 1494, see Nicolai Rubinstein, 'I primi anni del Consilio Maggiore di Firenze (1494–1499)', in *Archivio Storico Italiano* 112 (1954), pp. 151–194 (first part) and 321–347 (second part); for Savonarola's role see pp. 153–154, 171, 174–177, 180–181, 188–189, 336–337. See also n. 335 and context.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

shaken authority with the help of Savonarola, whose words affected many. It is important to notice Savonarola's special position in the junction between the government, the intellectuals, and the common people. Thus, the chronicler emphasizes Savonarola's contribution to the establishment of the authority of the Great Council, the importance of his warnings against the aristocrats (*Grandi*) who acted against the popular government, and his call for preserving the common good of the city.[25] With regard to the accusations against the involvement of ecclesiastics in political matters, Savonarola responded by using historical examples; his call for a general reconciliation was the cause of a declaration by the *Signoria* of a general amnesty for everything that was done until November 9, 1494.[26] In the meantime, the chronicler believes in Savonarola's blessed influence on the city;[27] and he thus describes the political change in Florence under Savonarola's inspiration:

> Florence has turned from the false and tyrannical governor towards a true and popular state.[28]

Savonarola is thus described as someone who exercises great influence over the Florentines. He uses his status justly and calls in his sermons for conciliation and peace between the citizens. The same message is delivered in Domenico da Ponzo's sermons, and the activity of both preachers is called by the chronicler *opera divina*;[29] Parenti sees the source of the rivalry between the two in Domenico's character and in personal jealousy.[30] But despite their influence, the popular government still had to face many dangers.[31]

In May 1496 Savonarola's fame reached its peak and his name was known all over the world;[32] when a French ambassador came to Florence, after visiting the *Signoria*'s palace, he visited Savonarola.[33] Savonarola's sermons were regarded as essential for keeping the common

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[25] *Ibid.*, p. 168.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 172.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 173.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 178: "… Firenze dal falso e tirannico governatore al vero e popolare stato venne…"
[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 189–190, 196.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 199.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 189.
[32] Schnitzer [ed.], *Quellen…* vol. 4, p. 120: "Tanto sia che o in verita o fintamente, tanta autorita contratta s' haveva frate Jeronimo, che in tutto il mondo nominato era."
[33] Landucci, *Diario…* p. 132.

good,[34] and his words impressed the intellectuals.[35] On Savonarola's public image we can learn from a contemporary saying delivered by Parenti:

> I dare say that if he was deceiving these people, God deceived him.[36]

The chronicler emphasizes two important changes attributed to Savonarola: the change in the youth's behaviour and in the women's dress;[37] the change in the youth's behaviour provoked a general admiration.[38] Parenti's description of Savonarola's enemies reveals, once again, his public and political status: Florence already had the image of a city governed by a friar.[39] Savonarola exercised an enormous power of persuasion on the citizens;[40] the cooperation and dynamics between the popular preacher and the popular government are well described by the chronicler.[41] But there is also a great deal of tension in the city, due to the powerful enemies of both the preacher and the new government;[42] Savonarola's position in the public life of the city by January 1497 is both prestigious and hated.[43] The political power attributed to him and his companions in San Marco is enormous:

> For fra Jeronimo, fra Salvestro, and fra Domenico da Pescia seem to hold a session in San Marco and they give a regular audience to this or that citizen, and they are visited by our leaders, and while desiring to play a

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[34] Schnitzer [ed.], *Quellen*… vol. 4, pp. 121–122.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 131: "Ampliandosi la dottrina di frate Jeronimo et tirando alla sua religione molti di cui l'ingegno vedeva pronto et bene disposto a fare nelli studii frutto, volonta li venne di preparare studio o libreria altra che la di s. Marco."

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 136: "Uso etiam dire, che se lui ingannava questo popolo, Idio ingannava lui."

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 137.

[38] Landucci, *Diario*… pp. 136–137; Cerretani, *Storia*… p. 232.

[39] Schnitzer [ed.], *Quellen*… vol. 4, p. 137: "Onde da molti impugnate erano le provisioni del frate, non sendo molto necessarie, non tanto perche fussino ingiuste, quanto per che da lui venivano, volendoli torre reputatione, accio di fuori non si dicesse, che un frate la citta di Firenze ghovernasse."

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 142: "Tanto valse la persuasione sua in molti de nostri cittadini et il sospetto, quale haveamo, che noi altrimenti governandoci non capitassimo male."

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 144: "Onde ristrettisi hebbono mezo con alcuni de signori et feciono comandare a frate Jeronimo, che ripredicasse et confortasse il popolo al fare bene et stare contro a grandi o chi grande fare si volesse, parati fino a coll'arme manometterli, quando altro rimedio non ci fusse. El frate ubidi et la mattina di s. Simone a predicare comincio et raffermando cio che gia predicato havesse, molto e grandi spavento…"

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 151: "Et perche pure la parte a lui opposita era grande et potente…"

[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 155–156: "Di qui reputatione al frate et a lui grande nacque, benche non senza grandissima odio di molti cittadini…"

> role in the state, they are doing all these things which those who govern a state are used to do.[44]

We have another, similar description of Savonarola's political power during the events of January 1498; it seems now an old custom that the Florentine *Signoria* visits San Marco, ignoring the papal excommunication.[45] Savonarola's political power does not disappear even after his arrest.[46] The fears regarding his public status were among the reasons for his execution; this decision was regarded as the only way of finishing this affair.[47]

The chroniclers agree as to Savonarola's central position in public life and his important role in the political events which took place in Florence during the 1490s. But this central status attributed to the preacher should raise some questions: why was it Savonarola who enjoyed such a status and not, for example, another preacher such as Domenico da Ponzo, who, at least until the beginning of the events of 1494–1495, was regarded as equal in popularity to Savonarola; is it an unusual charisma, a unique way or style of preaching, an immaculate way of life, or a successful manipulation of a political timing? How can we explain his relations with, and influence over, the most famous Florentine humanists? How can we explain Savonarola's political position and view in the public debate which took place in the city? Was it a consolidated political view which was part of a whole world-view which he developed, or was Savonarola's political involvement accidental and marginal in comparison with his religious views and his call for a general spiritual reform? Could we separate his spiritual and religious vision from his political vision? What was the dynamic which enabled him as a preacher to reach such a public status and influence on political matters?

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[44] *Ibid.*, p. 157: "Imperoche si vedeano frate Jeronimo, frate Salvestro et frate Domenico da Pescia tenere assidua pratiche in san Marco et dare ordinaria audienza a questo et quell' altro cittadino et visitati essere da primati nostri desiderosi dello stato partigiano et tutte quelle cose farsi, le quali da chi tiene stato si costumano." Silvestro Maruffi and Domenico da Pescia are Savonarola's two famous companions. The three friars were executed in 1498.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 222: "A di 6 el giorno della epifania la nostra Signoria, la quale frateschа era, in sublevatione della parte ando a vicitare la chiesa di s. Marco secondo l'antica consuetudine, non havendo respecto alla excomunicatione papale."

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 267: "Mirabile cosa della impressione nelle menti tenere factasi di questo frate."

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 277.

The dispute regarding Savonarola has not been detached from the descriptions of the historical events. Let us now discuss some of the historiography regarding the affair.

The opposing views of Machiavelli and Guicciardini regarding Savonarola anticipated much of the modern historiography. Machiavelli's view was in the beginning hostile and critical.[48] This primary impression was later changed into a more complex view, as shown by Weinstein.[49] In Machiavelli's letter dated May 17, 1521 to Guicciardini, Weinstein sees both the primary hostile impression and the changed and more mature attitude to Savonarola, which is now ironical and more tolerant.[50] But even this later attitude is not all that far from the early impression of 1498, and it represents Machiavelli's ironical and critical view of Savonarola.

Guicciardini's attitude towards the popular preacher was positive and supportive. Savonarola is described as someone who surprisingly helped the popular government against its many enemies—the supporters of the previous Medicean regime. He is thus described as a very talented and gifted man who had conducted many changes in the city.[51]

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[48] Such an attitude is expressed in a letter dated March 9, 1498, to Ricciardo Becchi, the representative of Florence in Rome. In this letter Machiavelli summarizes his impression of the preacher, based on his own experience. Savonarola is described here as an intriguer, hypocrite, and a liar, an instigator and an evil-thinker who tries with all his power to exploit and manipulate the changing conditions for his own benefit. See, Niccolò Machiavelli, *Tutte le opere*, ed. Mario Martelli (Firenze 1971), pp. 1010–1012. See also Mario Martelli, 'Machiavelli e Savonarola', in Gian Carlo Garfagnini [ed.], *Savonarola—democrazia, tirannide, profezia* (Firenze 1998), pp. 67–89. Martelli presents a more positive account of Machiavelli in regard to Savonarola, in which he appreciated the political virtue realized in the preacher of changing one's opinion according to the changing circumstances; see especially pp. 73–78. Compare with Machiavelli's descriptions of Francesco in Mark Jurdjevic, 'Machiavelli's Sketches of Francesco Valori and the Reconstruction of Florentine History', in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63/1 (2002), pp. 185–206.

[49] Weinstein, 'Machiavelli and Savonarola', in Gilmore [ed.], *Studies on Machiavelli*… pp. 253–264.

[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 263–264. In this letter Machiavelli describes what he regards as the ideal preacher whose duty is to show his audience the way to hell in order that they will know how to run away from it. This is why the ideal preacher should be more mad, skilled, and hypocritical than any other preacher; see Machiavelli, *Tutte*… p. 1203: " … uno più pazzo che il Ponzo, più versuto che fra Girolamo, più ippocrito che frate Alberto"; "… perchè io credo che questo sarebbe il vero modo ad andare in Paradiso: inparare la via dello Inferno per fuggirla."

[51] Francesco Guicciardini, *Opere*, 3 vols., ed. Emanuella Lugnani Scarano (Torino 1970), vol. 1, p. 133: "… perchè fu uomo valentissimo e instrumento di cose e molti grandi nella città nostra…"

His enormous prestige among the people and his record and fame as a prophet were the main reasons for including him in the delegation to the French king, and his presence ensured Florence a fair treatment by the king.[52] The establishment of the popular government was approved by Savonarola, who regarded the political change as an expression of God's will.[53] The popular regime which was established in 1494 was also approved by Guicciardini,[54] who emphasizes Savonarola's role in the founding of the Great Council.[55]

Guicciardini's attitude to Savonarola is thus different, and almost opposed to, Machiavelli's. They both admit that the preacher enjoyed an enormous influence on the events which occurred during the 1490s, but their interpretation regarding the nature of this influence and of Savonarola's character, as well as whether it was good or bad for Florence, is different. We can say that out of these opposing views modern historiography developed its attitudes and interpretations to this historical affair. Let us begin in mid-nineteenth century with the interpretations of Burckhardt and Villari.[56]

In Burckhardt's monumental book which was published in 1860 we can find several descriptions of Savonarola from which we can learn about his attitiude.[57] He sees in Savonarola a combination of innocence and true faith, but also intellectual restrictions which stood in contrast to his times—the Renaissance—as Burckhardt himself wished it to be. And so, the furnace lighted by Savonarola is regarded as totally contrasted to the art and culture of the epoch.[58] By using his eloquence—despite his inferior style—he expressed his powerful personality and imposed his authority.[59] Savonarola's powerful personality, according to Burckhardt, stood in contrast to the Florentine essence. His partly ful-

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 134.
[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 134–135.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 301.
[55] *Ibid.*, p. 316: "E di poi saltato su questo frate, e ha tanto gridato el governo populare e uno consiglio grande alla viniziana…"
[56] The period between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century is characterized by much personal involvement of those who dealt with this affair: Savonarola's supporters saw him as a saint, his opponents saw him as a heretic. The influence of the Counter-Reformation is evident here in the different attitudes regarding the preacher. For a fundamental and critical discussion on this see Weinstein, 'Hagiography…'
[57] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization…* pp. 288, 292–296.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 288: "But no sooner did Savonarola come forward than he carried the people so triumphantly with him, that soon all their beloved art and culture melted away in the furnace which he lighted."
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 292.

filled prophecies gave the preacher his fame and authority.[60] So, at the centre of Burckhardt's explanation for Savonarola's public status, we have a contingent reason such as the fulfillment of prophecies which is a problematic historical explanation. Burckhardt attacked Savonarola's famous words on Giovanni Pico della Mirandola after his death.[61] His hostile attitude to Savonarola's visions and prophecies is evident.[62] As for the preacher's involvement in politics, Burckhardt argues that Savonarola only tried to prevent his enemies from taking the government back into their hands, and his political vision was a realization of the most naive theocracy. This is also the only meaning of Savonarola's political slogan that Christ is the king of Florence, which he repeats on every occasion.[63]

Burckhardt's view established much of the manner in which Savonarola was regarded in later historical interpretations: a naive and unsophisticated mediaeval relic who stood in stark contrast to the spirit of his age. Such an interpretation is already full of preconceptions about the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, as well as about the idea of progress in history. Opposed to this interpretation is Villari's view of Savonarola.

Villari's book was devoted to Savonarola and his times[64] and it presents a different view regarding Savonarola.[65] In the introduction, Villari argues that only a man who is not familiar with the facts regarding Savonarola can treat him as someone who wanted to revive the Middle Ages and to sacrifice the world for the sake of the Church; the historical facts present us with a different picture: Savonarola is described as a man who acted according to the Christian ideal of moral

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 293.

[61] *Ibid.*

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 294: "In his last days Savonarola seems to have recognized the vanity of his visions and prophecies."

[63] *Ibid.*

[64] As indicated in the title of this book (*La storia di Girolamo Savonarola e de'suoi tempi*) which was published in 1859 (the first volume) and in 1861 (the second volume). I shall refer to the English translation: Pasquale Villari, *Life and Times of Girolamo Savonarola*, trans. Linda Villari (London 1888).

[65] Villari's view was influenced by the New-Piagnoni, a group of friars and others who were active in the convent of San Marco in Florence in the mid-nineteenth century. They tried to renew the belief in Savonarola, whom they regarded as a saint and a prophet. Savonarola's message was now interpreted as relevant to the national struggle for the unification of Italy. The leader of this group, Vincenzo Marchese, himself a friar in San Marco, collected sources regarding Savonarola, which included sermons, letters, and compositions of the preacher. See Weinstein, *Savonarola*… p. 3.

example and self sacrifice which is the foundation of human society.[66] Savonarola, surrounded by philosophers, poets, and artists, who were among his ardent followers, was not the enemy of the Renaissance but rather a man who noticed its defects and decline; morality, religion, and freedom were connected in his thought, which was focused on a moral revival of the whole of humanity, and Savonarola was willing to sacrifice his life for this.[67] Savonarola was therefore the perfect product of the Renaissance, according to Villari.

We can see how Villari prepared in advance the background of Savonarola and of the critique against him at the time, by describing the immoral and corrupt atmosphere in Florence and the loss of Florentine freedom under Lorenzo de' Medici's regime. He thus argues that the cultural flourishing was disconnected from public responsibility and moral values.[68] Savonarola, on the other hand, is described as a man who attacked the corruption of the Italian princes and of the Church; in his sermons delivered in 1493 he expressed not only his theological views but also his struggle for the freedom of the Florentines.[69] The political change of 1494 took place without bloodshed thanks to Savonarola, who calls in his sermons for a general conciliation and peace between the citizens. The preacher is described as the heart and soul of the renewed republic and the defender of its freedom and union. He was the first to stand against the tyranny of the Medici in the name of the people. The historical circumstances turned Savonarola into Florence's saviour.[70]

Villari's view of Savonarola is thus opposed to Burckhardt's. The whole epoch is illuminated by the preacher and his public activity. Villari never abandons the point of view of an admirer, who justifies everything regarding the popular preacher, and who is in no way critical of him. He does not explain how Savonarola tried to strengthen the popular regime and what exactly was the relation between him and Florentine politics. It seems that his own biography—he was an exile from Bourbon Naples and a liberal supporter of the Italian national movement—had some influence on his attitude towards Savonarola.[71]

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[66] Villari, *Life and Times*… p. 27.
[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 26–28.
[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40.
[69] *Ibid.*, pp. 182, 185.
[70] *Ibid.*, pp. 214–215, 230, 241, 245, 259.
[71] Weinstein, 'Hagiography…' p. 485.

Later attitudes[72] could be characterized by two orientations: the first is focused on Savonarola's figure and it tries to explain his position and status by defining him as an unusual man: a saint and a martyr, a true prophet or God's messenger, a preacher who uses supernatural powers, or an extraordinary charismatic personality and a victim of the corrupted Church. We can find this orientation already in the apologetic compositions and the early biographies from the end of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century, a hagiography with Savonarola at the centre. This orientation was presented with a historical and more critical modification by Villari, and later by Schnitzer and Ridolfi.

Schnitzer opens his book with an apologetic introduction which focuses on Savonarola's pure intentions regarding the Church. The preacher is described here as someone who did not deny the papacy, the clergy, or the sacraments, but only wished to return to the ideals of poverty, purity, and sanctity of the primitive Church; he did not call for a separation and constitution of a new Church, but only preached peace, unity, and charity. Savonarola, according to Schnitzer, wanted Christianity to be active, honest, and true, and he was relying on the Scriptures.[73] Had he succeeded in his struggle for purifying the religious life, the Reformation and separation from the Church would have never occurred. Savonarola, for Schnitzer, represents the last moment of unity in the Church and this, Schnitzer claims, was the preacher's message and destiny.[74]

Ridolfi opens his many studies of Savonarola with a critical statement,[75] but his biography, published in 1952, is disappointing in regard to his view of the preacher: it seems that it does not differ much from hagiography. The education Savonarola received from his grandfather is described as a preparation for his great destiny;[76] Savonarola's letter to his father in which he explains his decision to become a friar is described not as a simple letter of a young man who ran away from

[72] The presentation of these orientations here is only thematic and in general outlines, and is not meant to be inclusive of every aspect. For such an inclusive discussion see Weinstein, 'Hagiography…'

[73] Schnitzer, *Savonarola*… vol. 1, pp. 5–6.

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[75] Ridolfi's attitude to Savonarola in general, and his specific contributions to the studies of the preacher, are presented in Cesare Vasoli, *Il Savonarola di Roberto Ridolfi* (Firenze 1996).

[76] Ridolfi, *Vita*… vol. 1, p. 5.

his home in order to become a friar, but rather, Ridolfi says, the future reformer is already presented in this letter.[77] Despite Ridolfi's critique of Schnitzer's view, which he regards as uncritical,[78] he himself is no more critical. He argues, for example, that all the events of 1494 were predicted in Savonarola's sermons; under the threat of Charles VIII the preacher's apocalyptic descriptions came true and Savonarola's authority and fame saved the city.[79] The preacher is described as a central figure in the public and political life of Florence and as the founder of the popular regime,[80] but Ridolfi does not explain in what manner Savonarola acted in politics, and he only emphasizes the preacher's unusual figure. The last chapter of Ridolfi's biography is a song of praise to Savonarola's chastity, modesty, and way of life.[81] Ridolfi ends his book with a modified version of Guicciardini's statement that Savonarola was a great prophet, and argues that he was a great man (*un grandissimo uomo*).[82]

The second modern orientation emphasizes different aspects of the historical context. This orientation is thus more balanced, critical, and historical than the former one. Rubinstein, Brucker, Gilbert, and Polizzotto, for instance, emphasize the political-institutional context.

Rubinstein argues that too much has been written about Florence of the late fifteenth century in terms of 'Savonarola and his epoch'; but in fact, the political traditions and problems the city had to cope with were much more dominant and had more effect on the events. It might be, he continues, that Savonarola, as a stranger, never really fully understood these traditions, and so he became an instrument and a symbol of contrasted forces, while he was imagining that he had turned Florence into a model-city according to a Thomistic pattern.[83] Rubinstein almost completely denies the influence of Savonarola's public activity, and refers only to the political traditions and forces which exploited the preacher in their own interests. He does not see any importance in

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[78] *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37, 39.
[79] *Ibid.*, pp. 110, 118, 128, 134.
[80] *Ibid.*, pp. 137–138, 140, 144, 154.
[81] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 4–6.
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[83] Nicolai Rubinstein, 'Politics and Constitution in Florence at the End of the Fifteenth Century', in E.F. Jacob, [ed.], *Italian Renaissance Studies* (London 1960), pp. 148–183; see p. 183.

the preacher's political position and in the way he acted in both the religious and political spheres.

Brucker argues that Savonarola's career is very exceptional in the history of Florence and it is incomparable to any other event. The preacher's fame and authority, as well as his involvement in politics, are extraordinary, and his great and continuing influence since 1494 caused much tension in Florence, because it broke the separation between the religious and the political spheres which was practiced in the city. This tension was the main reason for Savonarola's fall.[84] According to Brucker Savonarola had no coherent political programme to put in place of the Medici regime and his involvement in the political events was thus accidental.[85]

Gilbert describes Savonarola's centrality in Florentine politics and his influence on merchants and craftsmen, but also on the aristocrats. The preacher lost his status because he was excommunicated by the pope; his public activity is regarded by Gilbert as a dark shadow which covered the many colours of the city.[86]

Polizzotto emphasized the social context of the Savonarolian movement, and he focuses on the ideology of the movement during its fifty years of activity. This ideology included, according to Polizzotto, an admixture of Thomistic and late scholastic principles, together with an emphasis on the responsibility of the regime towards the citizens; this is the connection between the movement and the popular regime.[87] Polizzotto states that the Savonarolian movement was borne out of a conflict, the immediate reason of which was the fall of the Medici regime in November 1494. Focusing on the perspective of the Savonarolian movement in the context of Florentine politics enables us to obtain a better understanding of Florentine society, Polizzotto argues;[88] and he emphasizes that we should not exaggerate the influence of Savonarola and his followers on the decision to constitute the Great Council: only a careful comparison between different kinds of documents could give us a balanced picture.[89]

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[84] Gene Brucker, 'Savonarola and Florence: The Intolerable Burden', in Gian Paolo Biasin, Albert N. Mancini, Nicolas J. Perella [eds.], *Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (Napoli 1985), pp. 119–130; see p. 119.

[85] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[86] Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*… pp. 55–57.

[87] Polizzotto, *The Elect Nation*… pp. 4, 6–7.

[88] *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

[89] *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

Weinstein emphasizes yet another aspect of the historical context: the prophetic and apocalyptic tradition. The Florentine republic of 1494 had survived all the difficulties thanks to Savonarola; his sermons, full of prophetic and apocalyptic messages, had an enormous influence on many and gave the preacher fame and authority, but the political reform and the constitutional changes in the regime had not brought the peace and harmony which were promised in the sermons.[90] Weinstein wishes to establish a balance between Savonarola's specific influence and the influence of Florentine apocalyptic traditions which gave the city a unique destination. Only such a balanced picture could provide us with an explanation of Savonarola's public status and his influence on the Florentines.[91] Weinstein argues that, on the one hand, it is difficult to see Savonarola as a political reformer, but on the other, we cannot regard him only as an instrument in the hands of political forces. The first view attributes too much creativity to Savonarola while in fact, in political matters, he was only a conservative religious visionary;[92] the second view does not appreciate him enough and does not take into consideration his sensitivity to the people's will and his qualities as a popular leader.[93]

The rituals in public life are emphasized by Trexler, who argues that at the centre of Florentine public life there are different public rituals like religious and communal holidays, which involved, for instance, the activity of the religious youth and the adult confraternities. These rituals, according to Trexler, constitute the social, religious, and political dynamic of the city; by focusing on rituals we cannot separate religion and politics, as we can see from the involvement of ecclesiastics in the election process, which enabled the citizens to be less suspicious of each other; the ecclesiastics represented an ethical ideal which enabled them to act not only in regard to God but also within society: they supplied political services and were active in keeping order in the city.[94] Trexler argues that preachers had in such circumstances a central role in determining the right way of public behaviour; in their actions, which enjoyed the authority of the Scriptures, they had an enormous influence on the Florentines, and through their gestures they presented

[90] Weinstein, *Savonarola*… pp. 28, 30.
[91] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[92] Weinstein, 'Machiavelli…' pp. 259–260.
[93] Weinstein, *Savonarola*… p. 254.
[94] Trexler, *Public*… pp. 32–33, 36, 38–39.

the right behaviour.[95] Trexler criticizes the tendency of historians to break their narrative while dealing with the events of 1494, mainly because of the apparent contrast between two figures: Savonarola and Lorenzo de' Medici.[96] But the ritual context enables Trexler to introduce both Savonarola and Lorenzo as the main participants in what he calls the ritual revolution. Savonarola is thus described as someone who was just about returning to the old republican salvation model which was focused on the reform of the ecclesiastics in order to turn them into a centre of ritual power; the other possibility was to focus on younger generations as a source for the salvation of Florence—a model which was developed during the Medici regime and reached its culmination with Lorenzo.[97] After trying unsuccessfully the first possibility, Savonarola turned to the young, just like Lorenzo before him.[98]

Trexler depicts Savonarola as a republican prophet who was sensitive to public opinion and to the powerful dynamic in the streets.[99] Since May 1495 Savonarola acted intensively and encouraged the construction of a new hall for the Great Council; he had such an influence, Trexler argues, that never before in the history of the Florentine republic did the Florentines believe that their government was acting according to a cosmic determination, and thus the magistrates were God's officers.[100] In his vision of the future, Savonarola described more religious ritual activity in order to attract the attention of God and the angels; his purpose, Trexler claims, was to turn the whole city into a Church. Savonarola used the children as an instrument for changing the Florentines' way of life; their behaviour in the rituals gave them ritual centrality which had already originated during Lorenzo's regime.[101] This was Savonarola's revolutionary approach according to Trexler: he constituted a new civic salvation model, at the centre of which were not ecclesiastics or adult citizens but rather the children of Florence. Savonarola's new kingdom cult of Christ the king of Florence is thus a continuation of the Magi during Lorenzo's times.[102]

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[95] *Ibid.*, pp. 99–100.
[96] *Ibid.*, p. 420.
[97] *Ibid.*, pp. 420–421.
[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 421, 432.
[99] *Ibid.*, p. 469.
[100] *Ibid.*, p. 470.
[101] *Ibid.*, pp. 474–475, 479, 480.
[102] *Ibid.*, pp. 482–483. On the confraternity of the Magi see Hatfield, 'The Compagnia…'

Both orientations are problematic: the first one has to explain why Savonarola and not some other preacher was so central in the political events of the 1490s. Without discussing the historical background and context, it ends up focusing on an exceptional charisma or divine message. The second orientation, which is also a reaction against the first one, has to explain Savonarola's public, religious and political status and influence in the specific context of Florence in the 1490s on the one hand, and his relations with the wider context of the Renaissance and humanist movement on the other. Such an explanation leads to the uncovering of the presuppositions of each individual historian regarding the epoch. It seems that these presuppositions determine the interpretation of the entire epoch and of Savonarola's role, while using one-sided and unbalanced attitudes.

The dispute between Rubinstein, Brucker, and Gilbert, who are following Burckhardt in their contempt for what (according to their view) is represented by Savonarola, and Schnitzer and Ridolfi—the preacher's admirers—soon turns out to be the same dispute which had already started during the 1490s: for or against Savonarola. The views of Weinstein, Trexler, and Polizzotto, are more cautious and balanced. These views do not present Savonarola as a saint on the one hand, or as a stranger and exceptional figure on the other, but rather try to explain Savonarola's status and influence. Polizzotto, who focuses on the Savonarolian movement, discusses different attitudes inside this movement, but he does not explain the relation between Savonarola's political view, which approved the popular regime, and his political praxis. The main reason for this is that he is not focused enough on Savonarola and the events of the 1490s, during which Savonarola's political praxis was materializing. Such a focus requires a detailed discussion of the historical background of the 1490s, but such a discussion is beyond the time limits of Polizzotto's book: 1494–1545. On this background Weinstein and Trexler focus.

It is difficult for Weinstein to understand the relation between prophetic and apocalyptic traditions and the popular and republican trends approved by Savonarola, because these two traditions or orientations do not seem to him to be related. But Savonarola takes part in both the prophetic tradition and the late humanist movement, and he approves and supports the new popular and republican regime; his public position is very central and influential, and his activity is evident in the political, social, and religious life of the city. Weinstein regards Savonarola's relation to politics as accidental; and thus, for instance, he

argues that the preacher's approval of the republican regime should not be overestimated since it is based simply on an ethnic and geographic argument he found in Thomas Aquinas.[103] Savonarola's political view was mainly monarchist, Weinstein claims, and it is best expressed in the preacher's slogan that Christ is the king of Florence.[104] This view originated in eschatological traditions and its aim was to turn Florence into a new Zion. For Savonarola, Weinstein argues, there is no independent political discussion, but rather every political discussion is presented in a moral and Christian context.[105] In the next sections I shall try to show that Savonarola's political discussions and views were part of his general attitude which was at the centre of his activity during the 1490s; his support for the popular regime was at the centre of his political view. Naturally, as a friar and preacher, all his activity is related to religious notions, but, I would argue, it does not make this activity less political.

Trexler, who focuses on rituals, does not seem to refer to contents and ideas, or to the significance of the programme of political change in Florence. His important view regarding the public and religious life in Florence does not explain the way in which Savonarola became a republican prophet to anyone who is willing to take into consideration other aspects which influence individuals and societies, beside rituals, or, more important, to anyone who is unwilling to reduce religion into mere ritual.

In the next two sections, I would like to discuss the relations between Savonarola and the humanists or the humanist movement on the one hand, and politics on the other. I shall argue that Savonarola had complex relations with both the new Florentine humanist theology and politics, and that these relations are not accidental but rather essential for understanding his role in the drama which took place in Florence during the 1490s.

2. *Savonarola: An Anti-Humanist or A Pro-Humanist?*

In this section I would like to emphasize the complexity of Savonarola's historical figure in regard to his connections with humanists and with the relatively new intellectual fashion which modern scholarship

[103] Weinstein, 'Machiavelli…' p. 259.
[104] *Ibid.*, pp. 259–260.
[105] *Ibid.*, p. 260.

has called the humanist movement. My purpose is not to present the Florentine preacher either as a humanist or a supporter of humanist themes, nor as an anti-humanist. My purpose is rather to present him as a practical figure, whose positions were determined according to the changeable reality on the one hand, and his vision on the other. But, as a practical figure, he had to act with a view to the spiritual and political crisis and to the new humanist theology. Thus, it is not surprising that such a complex figure has produced so many contrasted views and interpretations, such as those discussed in the previous section.

It is easy to find anti-humanist rhetoric in Savonarola's sermons, and his *dictum* that any old lady knows more about faith than Plato is well-known.[106] But Savonarola rejects Plato in the context of the Christian faith and from the point of view of someone who knows and has read Platonic dialogues. This is why he can make, in another context, while presenting his critique of astrology, a positive use of the authority of the same Plato, and of Aristotle, who were both against astrology.[107] One could say that Savonarola rejects the use of Plato in a theological context, but approves of such a use in a discussion of natural science; but, as I shall show shortly, this is not the case. Savonarola is a practical man, who changes his views according to changeable reality. These two last examples were taken from sermons delivered in the mid 1490s (the first sermon cited above was delivered in May 31, 1495, and the second in February 28, 1496). Savonarola was already at the centre of the stormy events which included the banishment of Piero de' Medici, the episode with Charles VIII, and the rise of a popular government in Florence. Savonarola, as we have seen in the previous section, played a central role in these events. He became a powerful and influential figure in the religious and political life of the city. Now he could criticize the

[106] Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche Italiane Ai Fiorentini*, 4 vols. (Perugia-Venezia and Firenze 1930–1935), eds. Francesco Cognasso (vols. 1 and 2) and Roberto Palmarocchi (vols. 3a and 3b), vol. 2, p. 216: "Vedi che oggi… di quassù non si dice se non: Platone quello uomo divino: io ti dico che e' debbe essere più presto a casa del diavolo. Io ero già in questo errore e studiavo molto quelli dialogi di Platone, ma poi, quando Iddio mi dette lume, io ho tutto stracciato quello che ne avevo scritto. Che giova tanta sapienzia, se sapeva poi più una vecchierella della fede che Platone?"

[107] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, pp. 283–284: "Tu credi allo astrologo; va, vedi se nessuno savio scrisse mai di astrologia, o Aristotele o Platone. Non ne troverrai mai nessuno; non dico di quella astrologia che e' moti del cielo, dico della iudicatoria." On Savonarola's relations with the humanists and his attitude to the study of pagan philosophy see Walker, *The Ancient…* pp. 47–51. On his attitude to Plato see Lorenza Tromboni, 'Girolamo Savonarola lettore di Platone: edizione e commento del *De doctrina Platonicorum*, in *Rinascimento* XLVI (2006), pp. 133–213.

use of Plato in a theological context, and at the same time use his name to reject astrology.[108] Plato and the Neoplatonic philosophers were very popular among the Florentine humanists of the period, and the notion of a *prisca theologia* was at the centre of Ficino's humanist theology, as we have seen in chapter three. Astrology was always a popular science, but it could become even more popular under the Neoplatonic influence, and the influential figure of Marsilio Ficino who was both a Platonist and an astrologer. Such an intellectual context, which included two models, the philosopher and the astrologer, could have been a threat to the popularity and authority of the preaching prophet—Savonarola's own model. I shall return to this point in section five.

Back in the early 1490s, Savonarola was only beginning to acquire influence, so he had to be much more careful. While we can already find some anti-humanist rhetoric in his sermons on John's first Epistle,[109] we are faced in these same sermons with an obvious humanist influence.

Savonarola clearly uses the verbs *suadere* or *persuadere* for describing the duty of the preacher rather than *docere* or *demonstrare* which were among the popular verbs in the mediaeval thematic sermon, as described by John O'Malley and discussed especially in the introduction and in chapter two of this book.[110] This is an influence of the Ciceronian theory of rhetoric and the classical epideictic style. Another Ciceronian trace, this time of the *Academica*, can be found in sermon

[108] And indeed, Savonarola specifically criticized the Platonists in two later sermons, delivered on February 25, 1497 (*Prediche sopra Ezechiele*, 2 vols., ed Roberto Ridolfi (Roma 1955), vol. 1, pp. 324–336; see pp. 329–330) and on March 18, 1498 (*Prediche sopra L'Esodo*, 2 vols., ed Pier Giorgio Ricci (Roma 1955), vol. 2, pp. 289–329; see pp. 290–292). See Garin, *La cultura*… pp. 201–206; Walker, *The Ancient*… pp. 43–47.

[109] Savonarola, *Sermones in primam divi Ioannis epistolam*, eds. Armando F. Verde and Elettra Giaconi (Firenze 1998), pp. 248–250: "Quomodo enim *renuntiasti diabolo et pompis eius* qui opera eius quottidie facis? Non attendis ad legem Christi sed ad libros Gentilium. Ecce, Magi relinqunt gentilitatem et ad Christum veniunt et tu, relicto Christo, curris ad gentilitatem. Reliquisti mana et panem angelorum et cupis saturare *ventrem tuum de siliquis porchorum* (Lc 15, 16)."

[110] *Ibid.*, p. 4: "Si facile esset, dilectissimi, mentibus humanis *suadere* vel millesimam partem glorie beatorum"; p. 6: "Idcirco non potest homo elevari ad celestia etiam cum audit *predicantem* et efficaciter *suadentem*"; p. 76: "O si possem vobis hodie *persuadere* ut, relictis terrenis, eterna sequeremini"; p. 78: "Verbum certe altum et difficile ad explanandum et difficilius ad *persuadendum*, sed incipiamus explanare quia sic, fortasse, Domino adiuvante, incipiam *persuadere*"; p. 226: "… nulla mihi esset difficultas vobis *persuadere* ut, relictis omnibus terrenis, post hoc nomen curreretis ut aprehenderetis illud"; p. 254: "Quod si tibi incredibile videbitur propter hoc quia non es expertus, ostendemus et *persuadebimus* per immutationem quam fecit in cordibus peccatorum."

XIII, delivered in December 26, 1490, where Savonarola uses some typical terms of the ancient skeptical Academy such as *probabilis, probabiliter* or *verisimilis*, to describe the contemplative but unwritten truths regarding the life and deeds of Christ which can be somehow comprehended from the Scriptures.[111] But the question I would like to raise here is whom Savonarola wants to persuade. My answer would be the Florentine humanists. Let us discuss in some detail the fifteenth sermon of the sermons on John's first Epistle delivered on January 1st 1490/1491.

Armando Verde has contrasted Savonarola's negative attitude towards the use and study of pagan classical authors in a theological context with Marcello di Virgilio Adriani's affirmative attitude.[112] In the fifteenth sermon, we find Savonarola's critique of all human knowledge and disciplines of his time; this critique was not only (as one would expect) of the relatively new humanistic rhetoric and the grammatical and philological approach, but, more surprising, it was also of the traditional scholastic discussions and their use of logic and syllogisms. Against, and far beyond, all this knowledge Savonarola puts the signification of Christ's name, which represents for him the essence of Christian knowledge.[113]

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[111] *Ibid.*, p. 176: "Quia ergo per contemplationem vite Yhesu Christi multum accendimur in amorem Dei, multa sunt relicta contemplationi devotarum mentium ut habeant unde quottidie nutriant dulcedinem mentis et amorem semper inveniendo nova mediante inspiratione divina. Itaque hec que non sunt scripta sed contemplata proferimus *quasi probabilia, non quasi certa*"; p. 184: "Hec igitur ita dicimus *probabiliter*, ut supra cetera fecimus, contemplantes qualia potuerunt esse hec gaudia nec tamen sperantes posse omnia intelligere, sed aliqualiter aprehendere et cum Virgine gaudere"; p. 188: "Item per similitudinem corporalem *verisimile est* quod esset Filius similis matri in omnibus"; "In aliis tamen *verisimile est* quod essent similes maxime quia bonitas complexionis et decor exterior multum proficiunt ad interiorem dispositionem anime."

[112] Verde, *Lo studio*… vol. IV, pp. 1309–1318; see especially p. 1310: "L'intera prolusione può essere considerata, almeno obiettivamente, come una seria e dignitosa risposta, data in termini propositivi, alla tesi savonaroliana circa la nocività degli studi degli autori 'pagani' per la teologia, dimostrando che, al contrario, gli studi dei classici coltivati dagli umanisti producono un più puro concetto di Dio e costituiscono un presupposto del discorso teologico più dignitoso di quello che la religione cristiana gli ha dato."

[113] Savonarola, *Sermones in primam divi Ioannis epistolam*… p. 216: "In hoc enim absconditi sunt omnes thesauri sapientie et scientie. Quid ergo? Sufficit mihi si possum huius nominis intelligere significatum. Volo igitur effici puer, volo gramaticam discere. Veni, gramatice: dic mihi quid significat hoc nomen Yhesus, si nosti. Et ecce gloriatur ille et dicit:—Veni ad me et plene de hoc te instruam—. Sed et quid ita gloriaris? Putasne quia intelligis que legis? Fratres, iterum dico vobis: sufficit mihi intelligere significatum huius nominis: tunc enim omnem habeo scientiam. Alii querant significata infinitorum vocabulorum, alii ornatum verborum, alii gravitatem sententiarum, alii magnas silvas

Lorenzo Polizzotto has described Savonarola's pragmatic approach towards his reform and his efforts to draw to San Marco members of the aristocratic families of Florence and thus to gain more power and influence.[114] Developing this suggestion, I would say that Savonarola's critique of the knowledge and sciences of his time—including scholastic and humanistic methods and procedures—is once again an instrument for gaining support, this time of the Florentine intellectuals. In this critique Savonarola emphasizes his critical attitude towards scholastic theology (*gravitas sententiarum*) and scholastic practices like syllogisms or logic (*involutiones syllogismorum*) as well as towards traditional mediaeval natural sciences (*proportiones numerorum*, *cursus syderum*, *naturae rerum*). This would have seemed unusual and thus remarkable to the local humanists, who would expect only a critique of the new rhetoric (*ornatus verborum*) and of the philological approach (*significata infinitorum vocabulorum*). Thus, Savonarola's critique here includes natural sciences, grammar, poetry, rhetoric, logic and philosophy, and it seems much more radical and negative towards all human knowledge than Verde's description of Savonarola's opposition towards the use of classical authors in theological context. But then we have a surprise.

Immediately after this radical critique, Savonarola gives an example for five stages of understanding, since different men understand differ-

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metrorum, alii involutiones syllogismorum, alii magnitudines et formas figurarum, alii proportiones numerorum, alii melodias vocum, alii cursus syderum, alii naturas rerum, alii cultus agrorum, alii artem acquirendarum pecuniarum, alii diversas artes huius seculi; diversi letentur et gaudeant in deliciis huius seculi sive in scientia, *ego autem in Domino gaudebo et exultabo in Deo Yhesu meo* (Abacuch 3, 18). In hoc enim omnia bona invenio, in hoc omnem dulcedinem, in hoc omnem salutem. Hec sit scientia mea, hec gramatica mea, hoc canticum meum, hoc rethorica mea, hoc logica mea, hoc mea philosophia, hoc divitie mee, hoc delitie mee. Sufficit mihi significatum huius nominis posse utcumque etiam intelligere. Hoc enim intelligere est consumata sapientia. *Non enim*—Ait Apostolus—*iudicavi me scire aliquid inter vos nisi Yhesum Christum et hunc crucifixum* (2 ad Cor. 2; 1 Cor. 2, 2)."

[114] Polizzotto, 'Savonarola, San Marco and the Reform', in *Memorie Domenicane* 29 (1998), pp. 39–49; see pp. 41–42: "Savonarola not only welcomed into the convent novices drawn from families belonging to the Florentine elite, but also encouraged them to do so by pursuing a policy of active recruitment which scandalized some of the more conservative friars of San Marco"; p. 42: "He [Savonarola] well realized that, without the contribution of the social and intellectual elites, he had no prospect of success. Their support was essential because they could provide expertise, as well as access to the political, financial and ecclesiastical assistance which Savonarola's planned reform required, if it were to have a chance of success. This was particularly true since Savonarola's religious plans entailed a major reform of the Florentine political system."

ently the signification of Christ's name.[115] The example regarding the constrains on human capacity to understand this mysterious knowledge and the different levels of understanding, as given by Savonarola, is clearly a Christian Latin version of a known Platonic myth, the myth of the cave described at the begining of book VII of Plato's *Republic*.[116] Plato is the most popular classical philosopher among the Florentine humanists, the latest product of the renovation of ancient Greek philosohy in the fifteenth century, led in Florence by Ficino, as part of the revival of learning in Western Europe. It is quite clear that Savonarola is aware of these facts and that he uses the Platonic myth here at the beginning of 1490s to gain the support of the Florentine intellectual elite. By doing that he played a part in the new humanist theology which questioned the traditional boundary between the human and the divine and struggled for positing a new foundation for the relations between man and God, and the boundaries between them. But it is important to notice that Savonarola remained a pragmatic figure who was completely loyal to the realization of his renovation vision in the

[115] Savonarola, *Sermones in primam divi Ioannis epistolam*… p. 216: "Ut autem melius intelligatis et credatis que dico, facio distinctionem et similitudinem. Quidam enim intelligunt per solum auditum aurium, quidam per auditum cordis sed valde confusum, quidam per umbras eius clare et distinctas visas, quidam etiam per quemdam tactum, quidam autem omnino aperte."

[116] *Ibid.*, pp. 216–218: "Sit caverna magna *sub terra* [Plato, *Republic* 514a3] et quadra et magnum luminare in principio, post quod sint *diversa animalia* [515a1] que ludant discurrant ex transverso caverne ita quod *umbre perveniant ad oppositam parietem* [515a7–8] caverne, et post hec animalia, scilicet in medio caverne, sint tres columne et quinque homines quorum unus sit cecus catenatus prope primam columnam, alter vero sit non penitus cecus sed videns cum quadam obumbratione et nihil clare sed confuse videat et sit ligatus ad columnam ita quod respiciat parietem ubi sunt umbre et non possit se vertere, et eodem modo sit ligatus tertius sed clare videat, et eodem modo quartus clare videns ita quod etiam frequenter ab animalibus illis tangatur post terga, ita tamen quod numquam videat quid est illud quod tangit eum. Et pono quod isti tres numquam aliquid aliud viderint preter istam medietatem caverne cum umbris suis et etiam semetipsos invicem. *Quintus autem* [515c6…] sit solutus et videat lumen et animalia et totam cavernam. Hic ergo cognoscit umbras et causas earum distincte. Ille autem qui tangitur cognoscit quia aliquid est quod ipsum tangit et facit umbras, sed nescit quid sit illud. Et similiter 3s, licet non ita clare; 2s autem cognoscit confuse; primus autem, qui cecus est et non tangitur nec videt umbras, non potest hoc cognoscere nisi per auditum aliorum. Hec igitur caverna assimilatur huic mundo. Nos enim, existentes in hoc mundo, non cognoscimus immaterialia et invisibilia Dei nisi per umbras, et ita hoc nomen Yhesu diversimode a diversis cognoscitur. Quidam aperte cognoscunt, ut beati, angeli et homines, verum non comprehendunt; solus autem Deus, idest Sancta Trinitas, hoc nomen comprehendit, unde Hieremias dicit, ut allegavimus: *Incomprehensibilis cogitatu* (Ier 32, 18)."

city and in the Church. His part in the evolution of the new humanist theology was thus much more limited in comparison to that of a man like Caroli. But, on the other hand, there is no such contrast between Savonarola and Ficino as described by Allen;[117] in fact, we can compare Ficino's Platonic critique of poets and poetry, represented by Allen,[118] with Savonarola's critique from 1491, the *Apologeticus de ratione poeticae artis*.[119] Here we find a distinction between the theologian and the poet, who use metaphors for different reasons; Savonarola, before presenting the relations between metaphors and the truth in the Scriptures, mentions Plato:

> For Plato uses metaphors in almost all of his books; but still the philosophy of Plato is not a poetic art.[120]

The analogy, albeit not explicit, is between Plato's philosophy and the truth of Scriptures, both as opposed to the metaphors and deceits of the poets. Plato is again mentioned by Savonarola a paragraph latter, as a critique of the Christians who have not listened to his warnings against the poets; this pagan philosopher would appear on the Day of Judgment and condemn the leaders and rulers of the Christians for not obeying the law, which demanded the banishment of these evil poets. The preacher joins the philosopher and demands that one should obey the law and not only banish these poets, but also burn their books, and

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[117] Allen, *Synoptic Art*… pp. 146–147. See also the first note in this chapter.

[118] *Ibid.*, pp. 93–123; see, e.g., p. 118: "It should alert us once again to the dangers of linking either Ficino in particular, or arguably Renaissance Neoplatonism in general, too closely with the humanists or with the age's wider concern with the revival of pagan letters. For Ficino's antiquity, Greek and Roman, was seen through severely Platonic eyes and was at core a censored if not censorious vision."

[119] Savonarola, *Apologeticus de ratione poeticae artis*, in Giancarlo Garfagnini and Eugenio Garin [eds.], *Scritti filosofici*, 2 vols. (Firenze 1982), vol. 1, pp. 211–272, and the notes on pp. 395–400.

[120] *Ibid.*, p. 263: "Nam Plato fere in omnibus libris suis metaphoris utitur; non tamen philosophia Platonis est ars poetica." But let me cite this sentence in the context: "Non ergo eadem ratione theologus qua poeta metaphoris utitur; quibus tamen, etiam si eadem ratione uteretur, non hac de causa poetarum ars esset theologia, quia metaphorae non pertinent ad essentiam scientiae sed potius ad ornatum. Nam Plato fere in omnibus libris suis metaphoris utitur; non tamen philosophia Platonis est ars poetica. Ornamenta enim templorum et serta atque coronae possunt et principum et civium domos exornare sicut et templa. Ceterum scriptura novi et veteris Testamenti similitudinibus utitur longe diversis a metaphoris poetarum: aut enim historias plenam veritatem continentes, aut parabolas decentissimas plenas honestate verborum proponit. Poetae vero, iuxta proverbium, mendaces sunt et in omnibus fere mendacia fingunt, fabulasque tam de diis quam de hominibus narrant quae libidinibus et stultissimis ac nephandissimis deorum hominumque commixtionibus plenae sunt."

the books of immoral ancient poets as well.[121] But which law is it that the Christian rulers must obey? The analogy is between *lex Christiana* and *lex platonica*, represented by Savonarola and Plato. Savonarola, then, approves of good and moral poets, and regards such poetry as essential for the education of children.[122]

Savonarola, as we have already seen, was a pragmatic man, and this was not the only place he used the method of *pagani contra paganos*. He was certainly not a Platonist, but he could use the authority of Plato for his own purposes. By doing so, he did play a part in humanist theology, and thus, cannot be contrasted to Ficino. His part was much more practical, political, and totally committed to his vision of renovation. Since this vision included the renovation of both religion and politics, as well as the intellectual life (as we can see from the discussion of poets and poetry, which was dedicated to the poet Ugolino Verino, one of Ficino's friends, who dedicated to Savonarola in 1491 his *Carmen de Christiana Religione ac Vitae Monasticae Foelicitate*, which was the reason for Savonarola's composition),[123] together with a very unique place for himself as a preaching prophet, and thus, for prophecies, it again could not be contrasted to Ficino's vision, discussed in chapter three.

Thus, indeed, we find in Ficino's earlier account of Savonarola, in a letter to Giovanni Cavalcanti dated December 12, 1494, discussing the importance of divine providence, prophets and prophecies, a very

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[121] *Ibid.*, pp. 264–265: "Contra hoc poetarum genus Plato legem ferendam censuit quam nostri christiani hodie nec intelligere nec servare volunt, ut in die iudicii surgat Plato et infidelis homo christianorum capita condemnet. Ait enim ferendam esse servandamque legem ut poetae de civitatibus pellantur, quia omnia et exemplo et auctoritate falsorum nephandissimorumque deorum ac turpissimorum versuum pruritu titillationeque devastantes libidinibus ignominiosissimis repleverunt. Quid igitur faciunt principes nostri? Cur haec mala dissimulant? Cur legem non ferunt ut non solum tales poetae civitatibus expellantur, sed etiam libri eorum aliorumque veterum qui de arte amandi, de meretriculis, de idolis ac de daemonum spurcissima nequissimaque superstitione editi fuerunt, igne usque ad pulverem consumantur?"

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 266: "Verum quidam non amatoria, non laudes idolorum, non turpia, sed virorum fortium gesta atque moralia versibus descripserunt et bene usi sunt arte poetica et modo eius. Hos igitur damnare nec possum nec debeo. Utrum tamen ipsorum libri sint utiles religioni nostrae discutiendum est. Et quidem posset aliquibus videri eos non solum utiles esse, sed maxime necessarios ad adolescentulorum animos aliorumque virorum ad bonos mores excitandos."

[123] *Ibid.*, pp. 395–397. For the relations between Savonarola and Ugolino Verino, as well as his relations with other leading Florentine intellectuals, see Weinstein, *Savonarola* … pp. 100, 110. The fact that both Verino and Ficino had publicly turned against Savonarola in 1498, as mentioned by Weinstein, *Savonarola*… p. 239, shows, again, the important role played by the preacher and his relations with the Florentine humanists.

positive attitude to the preacher; oracles and prophecies seem to be part of the essential relation between the human and the divine, and thus Savonarola is regarded as a man who was divinely elected for this mission.[124] Humanity needs this relation with the divinity, since without this relation it is destined to endless sufferings without any hope for salvation. Ficino emphasizes both the difference between the human and the divine and the way of overcoming this gap through oracles and prophecies.[125] Savonarola's role here seems very clear. He serves both as a case-study taken from the immediate Florentine political context, but also as a realization of the essential moments of revelation, a part of Ficino's own vision of renovation and humanist theology, as presented in his *De Christiana religione*.

Savonarola had yet another relation to pagan antiquity: he was related, mostly by Gianfrancesco Pico, to the skeptical tradition.

For Gianfrancesco Pico, Savonarola represented a true enthusiasm for, and commitment to the truth, a special interest in the ancient skeptics, and a critique of the exaggerated use of Aristotle by ecclesiastics in

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[124] Ficino, *Opera omnia*… vol. 1, p. 963: "Nonne propter multa delicta, postremum huic urbi hoc autumno exitium imminebat, nulla prorsus hominum virtute vitandum? Nonne divina clementia Florentinis indulgentissima, integro ante hunc autumnum quadriennio nob⟨is⟩ istud praenuntiavit? Per virum sanctimonia sapientiaque praestantem Hieronymum ex ordine praedicatorum, divinitus ad hoc electum. Nonne praesagiis monitisque divinis per hunc impletis, certissimum iamiam supra nostrum caput imminens exitum, nulla prorsus virtute nostra, sed praeter spem opinionemque nostram mirabiliter evitavimus? A Domino factum est istud, et est mirabile in oculis nostris." This letter is mentioned by Weinstein, *Savonarola*… p. 186, n. 4.

[125] *Ibid.*, p. 962: "Coguntur quoque cognoscere, non terrenam quidem provinciam ubi anguntur assidue, nunquam vero quiescunt, suam fore patriam, sed coelestem. Nulla vero potior assignari causa potest, ob quam mala Deus et adversa permittat, quam ratio Evangelista docens, coecos mutilatosque nasci nonnunquam admirabilem Dei potentiam bonitatemque hominibus declarandam. Mala videlicet hominibus incurabiliter curaturam. Quemadmodum et morbi fluctusve non quilibet, sed gravissimi, medicum gubernatoremve summum testificari solent. Saepe igitur homines et privatim, et publice, tam extremis undique coercentur angustiis, ut nusquam pateat exitus, nulla iam speretur humana salus, sed tamen divina bonitas et potestas filiis suis pia mente supplicitur obsecrantibus propitiam porrigans ex alto manum declarat, Deum solum esse in extremis calamitatibus servatorem. Idque tunc quidem demonstrat apertius, quando discrimina tanta diu prius, quae veniant, per Prophetam quendam ventura praedixerit"; "Epimenides Cretensis, vir divinus decem annos ante Persicum bellum, Dei oraculo monitus, pervenit Athenas, et sacrificia quaedam Dei oraculo edita fecit, Atheniensibusque Persicam formidantibus classem, praedixit decennio Persas non venturos, et postquam venerint infecta re discessuros. Eiusmodi sane virum Plato omnium sapientissimum esse censet, quamvis saepe vulgo stultissimus habeatur."

theological contexts.[126] Walker's important remark regarding those who adopted a skeptical point of view in their critique of ancient theology that "… it is ignorance and indifference that kill traditions, not hostility" is most relevant here.[127] An intelligent and efficient critique requires knowledge which, in itself, guarantees the continuity of tradition; in this case we are dealing with the tradition of classical philosophy and theology in humanist and theological Florentine circles. We should not forget that a deep religious feeling and a sense of religious crisis, common to both lay humanists and ecclesiastics, was in many cases the first impetus for studying the ancient pagan philosophy, history, and literature. There is enough evidence to show Savonarola's role here. He represented, encouraged, and promoted, through his activity, this religious feeling and the sense of a crisis, and he also was involved, at least to some extent, in humanist circles.[128] His critique of the philosophers

[126] Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *Vita*… p. 9: "Biasimava ancora chi piglia a seguire una dottrina, più dalla comune openione mosso che per haverla letta et esaminata. Et diceva per questo guasti li studii, mandando molti la volontà avanti l'intelletto, pervertenti l'ordine della natura et da Dio instituito. La qual cosa nello studio certamente è molto dannosa, perché debbe l'intelletto prima considerare quello che seguir vuole et non andare, come se dice, presso alle grida dalla comune openione. Strettamente la verità amava et se qualche cosa non gli fusse piaciuta, apertamente da qualunque dottore si fosse, lo confessava"; p. 10: "Imperoché miracolo pareva in quelli, che alli studii attendevano, havere la dottrina de' philosophi di costumi cristiani adornata, la quale nondimeno quando è da quelli secepta è come una spada tagliente nelle mani di uno ebrio et pazzo, la quale spesso l'amico et il proprio padrone amazza"; p. 11: "Nella qualcosa, come egli stesso a me disse, di mente gli uscì tutto quello che haveva delibarato, cioè di non essere cherico ma converso, per non passare, come diceva, da un secolo ad un altro, pensando essere poco da' secolari differenti quelli frati quali alle scientie di Aristotele et alle dispute et questioni troppo attendevano." The *locus classicus* where he mentions Savonarola's interest in Sextus is in the Latin version of his biography. See: *Vita*… pp. 112–113: "… quippe qui audiens graeca quaepiam Sexi philosophi monumenta asservari, in quibus universae doctrinae humanitus inventae ⟨confutatae⟩ essent, ea e graeco transferri in latinum, paululum antequam moreretur, mandaverat, perosus multorum, qui se scire iactabant, arrogantiam. Idque ipsum muneris Georgio Antonio Vespuccio utriusque linguae gnaro, qui ex eius erat sodalitate, delegarat, volebatque eidem operi Zenobium etiam Acciaiolum, utriusque linguae compotem eiusdemque virum sodalitatis, incumbere, fecissentque votis satis ni mors ipsum violenta rapuisset." See also the discussion in Walker, *The Ancient*… pp. 58–62; see especially his cautious description on pp. 58–59: "One result of the meeting between Savonarola and the Florentine intellectuals was the revival of ancient scepticism and, based on this, the development of a new kind of Christian apologetic, fideism." I would argue that, again, the notion of humanist theology might be very useful here, replacing terms like fideism or syncretism.

[127] Walker, *The Ancient*… p. 59.

[128] One piece of philological and paleographical evidence is presented in the detailed study by Gian Mario Cao, 'The Prehistory of Modern Scepticism…' p. 256: "Paleo-

was part of establishing his own authority as a preaching prophet, and thus very important for the realization of his renovation vision. I shall deal with this critique in the sermons in section five; but we can say at this stage that skeptical arguments against dogmatic philosophical doctrines could be very useful to him. As we have seen in chapter four, they were also useful to Pico.[129]

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graphical analyses of the manuscript [MS Laur. Plut. 85.11] confirm this hypothesis: besides the ownership notes made, first, by Giorgio Antonio Vespucci and, later, by the Convent of San Marco, they have also brought to light some autograph annotations, cross-reference marks and corrections in the handwriting of some of the most prominent figures in Lorenzo's circle: Angelo Poliziano, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and, probably, Marsilio Ficino." This manuscript included Sextus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* and *Against the Professors* and its wandering from the possession of Giorgio Antonio Vespucci to the *Medicea pubblica*, i.e., the library of San Marco, indicates some relation between several Florentine humanists, the skeptical tradition, and Savonarola. We have, of course, the beautiful literary description by Pietro Crinito in his *De honesta disciplina*, ed. Carlo Angeleri (Roma 1955), pp. 104–105, of a philosophical dispute, on the relation between ancient pagan theology and Christianity between Pico and Savonarola, held in the *Marciana academia* in San Marco. Savonarola is described here, on p. 104, as "… qui aetate nostra in omni prope philosophia maxime praestat." On Savonarola's philosophical knowledge see Garin, *La cultura*… pp. 201–212. See also David A. Lines, 'Pagan and Christian Ethics: Girolamo Savonarola and Ludovico Valenza on Moral Philosophy', in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* XVII (2006), pp. 427–444; and Tromboni, 'Girolamo Savonarola…'. Savonarola's relations with Pico (emphasized also in Crinito's description) were discussed in Gian Carlo Garfagnini, 'Pico e Savonarola', in Paolo Viti [ed.], *Pico, Poliziano e l'Umanesimo di fine Quattrocento* (Firenze 1994), pp. 149–157. See also Cerretani's account of the relation between the preacher and some of the most famous humanists of the time in his *Storia*… p. 252: "Questa fu oppinione del conte Giovanni della Mirandola del signor Giovanfrancesco suo nipote, exempli potissimi di dotrina et di religione, et del maestro Domenico Benivieni sacerdote d' integra vita, di messer Marsilio Ficino unicho de l'eta nostra et cosi di molti altri singhularissimi." Garin's observation in his 'Le interpretazioni…' p. 30 is also important in this context: "I due temi, della dignità dell'uomo e della pace fra le dottrine, sono dominanti entro un programma di ricostruzione spirituale degli uomini. E questo spiega il suo avvicinamento così deciso al Savonarola, anche se il suo orizzonte è più vasto, e i suoi problemi speculativi più profondi." On the importance of Giorgio Antonio Vespucci (c. 1434–1514) see Karl Schlebusch, 'Per una biografia di Giorgio Antonio Vespucci', in *Memorie Domenicane* 28 (1997), pp. 152–154. And see also Francesca Gallori and Simone Nencioni, 'I libri greci e latini dello scrittoio e della biblioteca di Giorgio Antonio Vespucci', in *Memorie Domenicane* 28 (1997), pp. 155–359; for the *Academica* see p. 311 and for Sextus see p. 191.

[129] But I would not go as far as Granada, 'Apologétique…' p. 31: "L'apologétique sceptique de Savonarola prétendait donc détruire l'apologétique ficinienne et son fondement." First, we should not forget that we have only the description of Gianfrancesco Pico regarding Savonarola's interest in Sextus, and even according to this description, the preacher did not manage to read Sextus before he died; second, Savonarola's critique of the philosophers can be found in his sermons since the beginning of the 1490s, and so this critique derived from other motivations and has other

The problem of defining Savonarola, whether he should be considered a representative of the mediaeval or modern culture (and thus contrasted to Machiavelli), critically represented by Garin,[130] is another aspect of the problem of Savonarola's relations with the humanists. Basically, it is an unsolved problem, and it is related, as I have argued in the first section, to the definition of Renaissance culture as a whole. Savonarola was related to Pico, Nesi, and the Benivieni brothers for instance, and his most critical opponent was the Dominican Caroli. It is impossible to measure his impact on the humanists, but it is also impossible to argue that there was no influence at all. Savonarola needed these relations with the intellectual elite, but he presented also something they needed. These relations had turned Savonarola into an essential part of the intellectual climate in Florence, a historical fact which historians usually find it hard to explain.[131] The spiritual crisis he presented was indeed something which was already in the air and humanist theology both uncovered the different aspects of this crisis, but was also, in its turn, derived from a deep sense of a crisis. This was an excellent preparation for the preaching prophet and his renovation vision. Let us move on now and discuss the relations between Savonarola and politics.

3. *Savonarola and Politics*

In this section I would like to focus on the political context and contents of Savonarola's sermons.[132] As I have shown in section one, Savonarola's political intentions and their significance were neglected by many historians. Thus, for instance, when Brucker assumes that in fifteenth-

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sources; third, the use of the term 'apologetic' for both Savonarola and Ficino is, as I have already argued, problematic. Creating a Savonarola *apologeticus* and *scepticus* will not help us solve the historical questions regarding the Florentine preacher and his context.

[130] Garin, *La cultura*… pp. 183–200.

[131] Trexler in his *Public*… tried to relate Lorenzo and Savonarola on the basis of what he called the ritual revolution, and thus to see a continuity where others saw a break. I have discussed the problems with his notion of the ritual in regard to religion in section one.

[132] On Savonarola and the political context see, e.g., two publications edited by Gian Carlo Garfagnini: *Savonarola el la politica* (Firenze 1997); *Savonarola—democrazia*… See also Mario Martelli, 'Savonarola e Lorenzo', in *Memorie Domenicane* 29 (1998), pp. 75–98, for some historiographical and textual problems.

century Florence there was a separation between a sacred/religious and a secular/political sphere, he fails to notice the significant connection between these spheres; for him, Savonarola had violated this separation and this was the reason for the enormous tension in the city which finally brought about the end of the affair.[133] But, as we have seen, this is not how the Florentine chroniclers described the events. They emphasized Savonarola's political status and influence in Florence of the 1490s. For them it was not impossible, or very strange, that a friar and preacher, the prior of San Marco—clearly a religious figure—would have also political influence. What was unusual for them, as well as for modern historians, was Savonarola's enormous influence. I would argue that there was a connection between religion and politics and that no such separation existed between the two areas in Florence's public life. In fact, such a connection or dynamic enabled the preacher to acquire his status and influence. As I shall show in this section, the dynamic in which religious concepts received social and political meaning in a public sermon enabled Savonarola to move from the religious towards the political sphere and to turn his religious authority into a political one. But let us recall first the political context of Savonarola's sermons as reported by the Florentine chroniclers.

In the begining of the 1490s we still find the powerful position of Lorenzo de' Medici—the first citizen of the city since 1469—unimpaired. Lorenzo had acquired this powerful position since the failure of the Pazzi conspiracy in April 1478.[134] Thanks to his successful journey to the king of Naples in December 6, 1479, Lorenzo had constituted his prestige as a leader, inside and outside Florence.[135] In 1490 Florence gained territorial achievements and Lorenzo's status reached its culmination.[136] Lorenzo's death in April 8, 1492,[137] signifies the turn-

[133] Brucker, 'Savonarola…' p. 127: "The 'intolerable burden,' which weighed so heavily upon the Florentines after 1494, was that peculiar blend of religion and politics that Savonarola represented"; p. 130: "The friar failed because his program was incompatible with the city's political traditions, which were based on a clear separation of the secular and the sacred." See also Peter Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli—Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance* (Princeton 1998), p. 10: "The division between the secular and spiritual realms, obscured by Savonarola's political influence and reasserted by Florentine humanism after 1494…"

[134] Parenti, *Storia*… p. 12.

[135] Landucci, *Diario*… pp. 33–34; pp. 64–65.

[136] Cerretani, *Storia*… pp. 183–184.

[137] Parenti, *Storia*… p. 21.

ing point.[138] His son and successor Piero will find it difficult to keep his father's position.[139]

During fifty-eight years of Medici government there were a number of conspiracies; one of them ended with the death of Giuliano—Lorenzo's brother.[140] In Florence the Medici had many foes who were waiting for an opportunity to take over the government;[141] in addition, political foes who were exiled waited for their opportunity to come back. The Florentines were waiting for Piero who received his father's public honour and replaced him in his public duties.[142]

Centralized government through supervising the elections of the magistrates was, as we have seen in chapter two, the old Medici political system which reached its culmination during Lorenzo's time. Lorenzo's death aroused some expectations for a change.[143] But in the elections of October 1492 Piero continued the supervision of the elections of magistrates and the centralized government.[144] This aroused expressions of dissatisfaction in Florence;[145] Piero's fate would be determined in the arena outside Florence—where there was an increasing tension between the French king and the king of Naples,[146] Piero's ally.

In December 1493 rumors were spread all over Italy about the coming invasion of Charles VIII.[147] Ferdinand the king of Naples was preparing for a war.[148] His death in January 1494 did not change the situation and his successor continued the preparations for the war. Piero keeps his loyalty to Naples and in Florence fear and confusion increased.[149] In May 1494 the Florentine regime gave a negative answer to the French king's request to pass through Florentine territory; other similar requests were also denied: Florence was loyal to Naples.[150]

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[138] Cerretani, *Storia*… p. 183.
[139] Parenti, *Storia*… p. 26.
[140] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[141] Thus, e.g., on July 2, 1481, a conspiracy for murdering Lorenzo was discovered. See Landucci, *Diario*… p. 38.
[142] Parenti, *Storia*… pp. 26–29.
[143] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[144] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[145] *Ibid.*, p. 47.
[146] *Ibid.*, p. 59.
[147] Cerretani attributes this planned invasion to the intrigues of Ludovico Sforza. See Cerretani, *Storia*… pp. 187, 195–196.
[148] Parenti, *Storia*… p. 62.
[149] *Ibid.*, pp. 63–65.
[150] *Ibid.*, pp. 73–74, 82–83, 100.

In October 1494 Charles entered Florence's territory. Piero tried through a private initiative and without informing the *Signoria* to come to an agreement with him.[151] This initiative aroused anger in Florence and the members of the *Signoria* decided to send a formal delegation to the French king. This delegation included four senior citizens and also one Dominican friar: Savonarola.[152] On November 5 the delegation went to meet Charles;[153] its purpose was to restore the relations with the king.[154]

When Piero returned to Florence, on November 8, he met with a hostile atmosphere. When he tried to enter to the *Signoria*'s palace while being armed on November 9, he was forced to stop and his deed was considered a rebellion against the legitimate authority of the Florentine regime; he was thus forced to escape from the city.[155] This is how sixty years of Medici political dominance in Florence came to an end.

In addition to all these events Florence had to cope with yet another problem: Pisa took advantage of the situation and, under the protection of the French king, made a rebellion against Florence on November 13, and demanded independence.[156] Savonarola was sent again to the French king—to find out his position towards Pisa and to ask for help in ending the rebellion. The king approved for the time being Pisa's freedom and announced that he intended to pass through Florence on his way to Naples.[157] Florence was thus preparing for the reception of the king.[158]

On November 17 Charles entered Florence; the Florentine regime organized a reception for him and tried to ascertain good terms for Florence.[159] The negotiations with the king were not easy: Charles was trying to bring Piero back to Florence but encountered a strong opposition which caused a delay of this issue.[160] At the end, the payment

[151] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
[152] *Ibid.*, pp. 117–118. And see also n. 13 and context above.
[153] *Ibid.*, p. 118.
[154] Cerretani, *Storia*… p. 199.
[155] Parenti, *Storia*… pp. 122–125.
[156] *Ibid.*, p. 129.
[157] *Ibid.*, pp. 129–131.
[158] Landucci, *Diario*… p. 79.
[159] Parenti, *Storia*… pp. 133–134.
[160] *Ibid.*, pp. 136–139.

arrangements to the king were settled,[161] and on November 28 the French king left the city on his way to Rome and Naples.[162]

The elections of December 1494 took place in an atmosphere of freedom:[163] Piero de' Medici was declared a rebel by the new *Signoria*, which decided also to allow the political exiles of 1434, 1444, 1448, 1458, 1466, and 1478 to return.[164] A change was felt in the city and it seemed that more authority was now in the hands of the people.[165] According to the Venetian model it was suggested to constitute in Florence a Great Council; the political reform was approved by both the People and the Commune Council.[166] Savonarola approved of these acts, while the aristocrates who were close to the Medici family (the *Bigi*) were strongly against it.[167]

On January 14, 1495, the Great Council—the institution which was most representative of the political reform and the new popular regime—was assembled; the People and the Commune Council were cancelled.[168] These acts were accompanied by an increasing social tension between the richer citizens who were identified with the aristocrates (the *Grandi*), and the lower and poorer classes (the *popolo minuto*), who were identified with the popular regime.[169] Savonarola was calling for peace while Domenico da Ponzo attacked Savonarola's pretension to predict.[170]

On March 1495 it was obvious that Florence, under the enormous influence of Savonarola and Domenico da Ponzo, was divided into two groups: those who approved of the French king and those who approved of the league of the Italian states against the king.[171] The split in the city concerning the topics and questions at stake is clear: on the one hand there are those who approve of the agreement with Charles, most of whom approved also of the political reform and Savonarola; on the

[161] In this case, too, the Florentine regime needed Savonarola, who demanded from the king that he should fulfil God's will and leave the city. See Landucci, *Diario*… pp. 87–88.
[162] Parenti, *Storia*… p. 144.
[163] *Ibid.*, pp. 150–151.
[164] Cerretani, *Storia*… p. 209.
[165] Parenti, *Storia*… pp. 155–157.
[166] *Ibid.*, pp. 158–159, 161.
[167] *Ibid.*, pp. 162–163.
[168] *Ibid.*, p. 168.
[169] *Ibid.*, p. 170.
[170] *Ibid.*, p. 171.
[171] *Ibid.*, pp. 189–193.

other hand there are those who approved of the league of the Italian states, most of whom were against the political reform and Savonarola. The unclear position of the king regarding the Florentine popular regime (for instance, the Florentine territories were not restored and the king clearly supported Piero de' Medici) made it difficult for those who supported the agreement with him to continue to hold this position. This situation led Parenti to reevaluate the agreement with the French: the agreement now was regarded as a mistake; those who approved of it were doing it out of ignorance, or out of evil intentions, or because of Savonarola's persuasion.[172] No doubt the difficulties and despair in Florence influenced this change, together with the political consideration according to which it seemed that the French king would not return any longer to Italy and thus there was no point in approving the agreement with him.[173]

On February 1496 there were no news from France, and thus the chronicler concludes regarding the atmosphere in the city:

> And in fact the city was divided: one part totally believed in fra Ieronimo; the other part, even though it was smaller in number, was stronger, and richer, and enjoyed more credit than the opposite part.[174]

Savonarola and his followers were facing powerful opposition and the struggle between the two parts was going to last until May 1498.

I shall now move on and present a political reading of Savonarola's sermons; I shall argue that we can find in the sermons a critique of the Florentine government and a clear political position regarding the dispute held in the city between 1494–1498. This critique represents, on the one hand, Savonarola's deep relation to Florentine politics and to all the problems which troubled the citizenry; on the other hand, this critique was part of the preacher's vision of an entire spiritual renovation which included every aspect of life. But unlike other preachers and similar visions, Savonarola had partly, and for a short period, succeeded in carrying out his political vision and in becoming a leading figure in Florentine politics during the 1490s. This political and spiritual vision was, on the one hand, a reaction to the political and institutional changes which occurred in the city during the second half of the fif-

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[172] *Ibid.*, p. 304.

[173] *Ibid.*

[174] *Ibid.*, p. 310: "E in effeto divisa era la città: una parte totalmente a frate Ieronimo credeano; l'altra, la quale minore era di numero di homini, ma piu potente di danari e di credito, contrarii li erano."

teenth century; on the other hand, this vision was part of the evolution of a new humanist theology in which many Florentine humanists and ecclesiastics played a part during the last decades of the century.[175] The effectiveness of Savonarola's political critique, in which religious terms became full of political significance and vice versa, was due to the complex relation between religion and politics and to the fact that there was no separation between these two areas. This enabled him as an influential preacher to be a mediator between the aristocratic rich and powerful families, the intellectual elite, and the common people under the threat of a serious and concrete political crisis. But the immediate political crisis had aroused other social, religious, and political tensions which, until 1494, were partly lying beneath the surface. Calls for a reform in the Church and in the religious orders were not new, but we cannot ignore the similarity between Caroli's struggle to reform his monastery in the early 1460s and Savonarola's struggle. We also cannot ignore the political tensions between the Medici and their many foes during the last decades of the century.

The first strategy which is used in the sermons that I would like to present is the creation of a succession in time between past and present; the interpretation of the Scriptures in their historical context is not separated from the critical analysis and discussion of the Florentine society and state at present; by this means the interpretation of Scripture becomes a critical instrument which aspires to discover both the 'truth' in the Scriptures and the 'truth' in the Florentine reality. Thus, in fact, a unity and succession exists in the sermons between an ancient and exemplary past represented by glorified events from the Scriptures and the present time of religious and political reality in the Florentine city-state. Savonarola presents this in a sermon delivered in March 19, 1496:

> In the same way that this text [Scripture] was verified in past times for the Apostles and other preachers, it is now verified for the present.[176]

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[175] On Savonarola's relation to the republican tradition in Florence represented by Salutati and Bruni see Paolo Viti, 'Savonarola e la tradizione republicana fiorentina', in Garfagnini [ed.], *Savonarola—democrazia*… pp. 55–65; see especially p. 61: "Il Savonarola ereditava ed applicava così le più alte concezioni ideologiche che avevano caratterizzato l'impegno civile del primo Umanesimo fiorentino, e che, in pratica, ormai affermato e stabilizzato il regime mediceo, avevano continuato a permanere anche dopo, solo che si pensi, ad esempio, alla cospirazione repubblicana del 1466." Savonarola mentioned "messer lionardo di Arezzo" in one of his sermons as part of his struggle for the new republican regime cited and discussed in Rubinstein, 'I primi anni…' pp. 336–337, and n. 246 there.

[176] Savonarola, *Prediche*… vol. 3b, p. 207: "Così come questo testo si è verificato

This is possible because of the unique nature of the Scriptures, written by God, not only to narrate historical events, but also to demonstrate and signify other things.[177] All other ancient texts have no such qualities. Thus, for instance, Livy's texts can only narrate past events.[178] Such an attitude towards the Scriptures receives its full meaning under the increasing status and influence of Savonarola in the city. References to present affairs are presented as part of the interpretation and succession, and it depends on the occasion in which the sermon is delivered and on the importance of the matter according to Savonarola. Events like the election of a new *Signoria*, an immediate danger to the Great Council, the coming war or an important delegation, are, of course, widely treated. Analogies between the prophets and biblical figures and figures of the present time are often used, together with Savonarola's own effort to constitute his authority in the created succession. Such a succession turns the interpretation of Scripture into an instrument for a deeper and truer understanding of the concrete political and religious reality outside the Church. The interpreted text is posited as a reflection on the Florentine reality, and it can give the audience an essential knowledge which is not available anywhere else. This knowledge represents the unique value of the interpretation of the Scriptures and it can be one possible explanation for the enormous interest which these sermons aroused.[179] This knowledge also meant presenting the audience with another meaning, *un altro senso*.[180] This meaning is immedeatly clarified and the image of the reflection becomes concrete and relevant:

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nel tempo passato per li Apostoli e altri predicatori, così si ha ancora a verificare al presente."

[177] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, pp. 64–65: "… così la Scrittura lui l' ha ordinata e composta, non solo perchè narrassi quelle guerre e quelle istorie, ma per quelle significare altre cose, e ha fatto scriverle quelle Scritture e quelle istorie con quelli nomi e con quelli loci, come abbiamo dichiarato di sopra, non solo per dimostrare che cosi elle fussino, ma per significare altro."

[178] *Ibid.*, p. 65.

[179] Such an interpretation aroused many opponents, since it included a radical critique of the religious, social, and political situation in the present. Some of these opponents wrote to Rome against Savonarola and he refers to them in the sermons. They argue that he was not interpreting the Scriptures but rather criticizing the pope and the cardinals. Savonarola replied that he only interpreted the Scriptures. In fact he did much more than that: while focusing on the Scriptures, his interpretations and conclusions went far beyond the biblical context. This is a good indication of how Savonarola made use of the traditional authority of the preacher and turned it into a radical and critical political tool which was new, and for some of his listeners unacceptable.

[180] Savonarola, *Prediche*… vol. 3a, p. 353: "Questo è quanto alla lettera dello Evangelio odierno. Lasciami riposare e andremo a 'n altro senso."

> If someone would like to clarify well this Gospel he would have first to clarify how it concerns the Jews, and secondly how it concerns us; but let me first move on to these clarifications.[181]

Savonarola repeats the verb *dichiarare*, to clarify or explain. It is not like *docere* or *demonstrare*—the typical verbs in thematic sermons. A good clarification of the Gospel should provide not only knowledge regarding the Jews and their responsibility for the crucifixion of Christ, but also we, the Florentines, would be enlightened by the interpretation and we would better understand our present situation. The interpretation of the Gospel is attached to the political, social, and religious situation of Rome and Italy, and it clarifies it for the audience.[182]

When Savonarola interprets, for instance, John 8, 3–11—the case of the woman who sinned which was brought before Christ in order to test him, he describes the flight of the 'old men'—the Pharisees and Scribes—Christ's foes, who were defeated by the wisdon of the Son of God. This description enables Savonarola to discuss more widely a known Florentine social topic: the old and the young; and thus he says:

> You were led to believe that white hair should give you authority of prudence. I am telling you that only the experience of good life should make you worthy of being cosidered prudent, and not the white hair.[183]

Christ's struggle against the 'old men', the *seniores*, led Savonarola directly to the description of the social and political situation in Florence, in which there was a struggle and tension between old and young.[184] To these young people who approve of him and who are now about

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[181] *Ibid.*: "Volendo dichiarare bene questo Evangelio, bisogna prima dichiararvelo come s' intende contra li Giudei, secundo, come s' intende contra di noi; ma prima che io venghi a queste dichiarazioni…"

[182] *Ibid.*, p. 361: "… sta un poco a udire quello che dice ora l' Evangelio. O Roma, o Italia…"

[183] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 33: "… tu ti dai ad intendere che li capelli canuti in capo ti dieno autorità di prudenzia. Io ti dico che la esperienzia della buona vita è quella sola che ti farà riputar prudente, non li capelli canuti."

[184] This is related to the undermining of authority and to the way in which Savonarola tried to constitute his own authority. "… la gioventù superò la tua sapienzia" (*ibid.*, p. 52), Savonarola argues against Italy. Savonarola's political course was based mainly on the young who approved of him and his reform. 'Young' in Florentine historical context could be applied until the age of 30. The 'adolescents' were until 28. The age of 24 signified independence, since from this age one could become a friar. The involvement of the young in the family business took place at an older age. On the central role of the young as part of the changes in the Florentine society and rituals during the fifteenth century, and on the special relation between Savonarola and the young, see Trexler, *Public*… pp. 368–399.

to become a political group in Florence Savonarola recommends not to yield to the old.[185] Thus, Christ and his foes in the Temple, and Florentine social and political reality, are placed one after the other and without separation, in one continuing succession of past and present.[186]

A similar succession is created when Savonarola discusses the threat not to preach the future in Amos 7, 12: "Also Amaziah said unto Amos, o thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Juda, and there eat bread, and prophesy there." This threat is carried over into the Florentine political context in which Savonarola's many foes were trying to prevent him from preaching and predicting; there are a lot of pressures on the pope, asking him to stop Savonarola, and the preacher refers to these pressures, but emphasizes that even the pope cannot give someone an order not to predict the future.[187] He then discusses the status and authority of a prophet, and focuses on attempts to prevent prophets from predicting:

> Go, read as much as you like; you would find only evil kings and sinful men who prohibited prophecies. And they all came to a bad end.[188]

The censorship on, and the threat to, the biblical prophet Amos turned out to be a censorship on, and a threat to, the Florentine prophet Savonarola, and the succession was created through a total annulment of the separation between past and present. Also the lack of faith and the opposition towards the prophet Zechariah become very concrete.[189] And indeed we find in the sermons many references to sanctions against Savonarola which sometimes included a temporal intermission of the sermons or a demand to go and preach in some other place.[190]

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[185] Savonarola, *Prediche…* vol. 3b, p. 33: "Contra questi tali vecchi inveterati ne' vizi, levatevi su voi, giovani, contra di loro, e increpateli, che doverresti dir loro:—voi doverresti dare esemplo a noi di bontà e voi ci date esemplo di malizia."

[186] The idea regarding the old as sinful and the young as just, which represents social tensions in Florence of that time, can be found in many of Savonarola's sermons. See, e.g., *Prediche…* vol. 3b., pp. 155, 156; *Prediche sopra Ezechiele…* vol. 1, p. 190.

[187] Savonarola, *Prediche…* vol. 3b, p. 39: "Tu scriverrai a Roma che io ho nominato el Papa, e che non può fare e non può dire. Scrivi a Roma, ma scrivi come io ho detto e di' così:—e' dice quel frate che non si può fare legge che non si profeti e che non la può fare el Papa questa legge."

[188] *Ibid.*: "Va, leggi quanto tu vuoi; tu non troverrai se non cattivi re e cattivi uomini che abbino proibito che e' non si profeti. E tutti sono capitati male."

[189] *Ibid.*, p. 227: "E se pure ne viene qualcuno alla predica, non vengono se non per apuntare el predicatore e poi per scrivere a Roma."

[190] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 107: "Io poi me ne voglio andare a Lucca e poi forse più in là…"

The succession of past and present enabled the preacher to employ yet another strategy: to use political terms from the Florentine context as if they were part of the biblical context. This is how he presents the first two verses in Amos 6:

> O you who are rich in Zion and you who trust in the mountain of Samaria, o leaders of the nations, *o ottimati*, go and see in Calneh.[191]

The term *ottimati* which is derived from the Latin *optimates* has a technical meaning in the political and social context of Florence: the *ottimati* were those who held most of the political positions and most of the economic power in the city. Savonarola added to the critique of the prophet Amos against the rich leaders of Israel a term which had a lot of meaning for his audience. It seems that Savonarola's words were very effective, since he had to clarify again and again in his commentary on these verses that he was not referring to anyone specific.[192] It might be an indication of the reaction of the audience and of certain names of Florentine *ottimati* which were shouted by the people. In like manner, when Savonarola interprets Amos' words regarding the divine punishment (Amos 9, 3–4), he adds to his explanation an important detail.[193] Italy is, of course, not part of the verses, in which we have only: "and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good." "Upon them", i.e., Italy, interprets Savonarola, and he immediately adds that God himself said these things. This strategy enabled the preacher to act simultaneously both in biblical and in Florentine contexts; the Scriptures are suddenly relevant, and they become a powerful instrument for criticizing the present, since their authority derives from a divine source. When there is no one in the audience who does not know who is about to be punished, Savonarola can immediately recommend the only remedy.[194] And there is no doubt about the foes:

> But it was clear that there were those who hated Christ and they were furious [*erano arabbiati*] to hurt him.[195]

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[191] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 425: "O voi che siate ricchi in Sion e vi confidate nel monte di Samaria, o capi de' popoli, *o ottimati*, andate a vedere in Calan…"

[192] *Ibid.*, pp. 431, 436.

[193] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 115: "… e se gli andranno nel profondo del mare, io ne li caverò, perchè io voglio che muoino con la spada, e convertirommi sopra di loro *e sopra della Italia* in male e non in bene. Questo dice el Signor Dio onnipotente."

[194] *Ibid.*, p. 116: "… e non arà remedio nessuno se non nel viver bene e nella contemplazione della Scrittura Santa…"

[195] *Ibid.*, p. 306: "E però nota che erano alcuni che avevano in odio Cristo ed erano arabbiati a fare ogni male contra di lui."

Savonarola uses here the word *arabbiati* to describe Christ's foes; this same word is used elsewhere to describe Savonarola's own foes.[196] Christ's foes are Savonarola's foes and both are described by the same word.

In other cases Savonarola can make a direct comparison between a known episode in the Scriptures and the present political situation; thus, for instance, after discussing the miracle performed by Christ on the blind man in John 9, he focuses on the fear of the blind man's parents when they were summoned to an interogation before the Pharisees. The fear is at the centre of the comparison:

> In like manner our citizens now behave when they want to put their feet in two shoes. When you go up there to the rostrum you have to say the truth and not to put your foot in two shoes. Of what are you afraid? This is the kingdom of Christ.[197]

We must first note that the word *cittadini* indicates in many cases in the sermons the beginning of a political discussion. The preacher is appealing to his listeners not as Christians, men, women, young, old, rich, poor, or just human beings—ways of appealing which we find many times in the sermons—but rather as citizens, i.e., from the point of view of their political status in the city, their rights and obligations which derived from their political status. The use of the word *cittadini* may open a discussion on a public matter which bothers the preacher and his audience.[198]

Just like the blind man's parents who were afraid of the Pharisees' interrogation, even though there cannot be a truer testimony to the blindeness of their son, our citizens were afraid to tell the truth even though it is Christ's kingdom and there is no reason to be afraid. This is a very concrete fear: the struggle between those who approve and those who oppose the new regime is now taking place, the threat to the popular government is real. The preacher tries by this comparison to

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[196] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 24: "Questi sono alcuni arrabbiati che non amono il bene commune, ma solo pensono alla loro utilità e vorrebbono pigliare questa lepre e appropriarsela a loro." See also pp. 395, 402.

[197] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 131: "Così fanno ancora e' nostri cittadini che vogliano tenere e' piedi in dua scarpe. Quando voi andate lassù in bigoncia, fate di dire la verità e non tenete el piè in dua scarpe; di che avete voi paura? Questo è il regno di Cristo."

[198] See, e.g., *ibid.*, p. 524: "Cittadini, io vorrei che voi stessi saldi al bene comune, avisandovi che voi siate obligati ad amare e adiutare il comune vostro"; *ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 35: "O cattivi cittadini, fatevi inanzi: eccene qua niuno di questi cattivi che non si vogliono convertire?"

encourage those who approve the regime; the kingdom of Christ, its supporters and opponents and the present fear of the struggle are all blended together: the blind man's parents are the citizens of Florence; events of the Gospel of John are now taking place in the city. The kingdom of God creates both the succession in time and the unity of events. The citizens who are grateful to God are compared to Lazarus who was raised from the dead by Christ,[199] or to the nation of Israel released from the Egyptian servitude. The kingdom of Christ is now taking place in Florence. The succession of time in a political context enabled the preacher to posit the Egyptian servitude beside the Medici regime, and in front of them—in one succession—the kingdom of Christ:

> And thus the Lord speaks to you, Florence, He who saved you from the Egyptian darkness; i.e., first of all in regard to the soul, [He saved your soul] from the blindness of sins; then He saved you from the servitude of Pharaoh: where you could not say a single word, He made you free.[200]

The above-mentioned servitude is most similar to the political reality and practice under the Medici. The freedom which has been accomplished should be considered divine and an act of grace:

> You, Florentine nation, you did not want to admit that it is from God the graces that were bestowed on you, He who saved you from servitude and brought you to freedom.[201]

The concept of grace—so central in Christianity—is here being laden with political meaning. Savonarola describes a political act of grace that was done to the Florentines; the religious meaning is, of course, retained: the speaker is a preacher and this is a sermon. But the concept receives also a political meaning: the political change should be regarded as divine grace. The religious meaning reinforces the political change and the political meaning makes the religious concept relevant and full of concrete meaning at the present; the grace becomes very practical, an essential part of active life. The new regime indeed needs a reinforcement, and Savonarola uses the succession of time and the

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[199] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 171.

[200] *Ibid.*, p. 157: "Così dice a te, o Firenze, el Signore, che t'ha cavata delle tenebre di Egitto; *idest* prima quanto all'anima, della cecità de' peccati; poi t'ha cavata della servitù di Faraone: dove prima tu non potevi parlare una parola, hatti fatta libera."

[201] *Ibid.*, p. 175: "Tu, popol fiorentino, non hai voluto ricognoscere da Dio le grazie che t' ha fatte, che t' ha cavato di servitù e hatti messo in libertà…"

dynamic between religion and politics in order to introduce it before his audience as a political grace.

Two other concepts I would like to introduce which were used in a similar way in the sermons are divine illumination or inspiration and prayer.

When Savonarola discusses the resurrection of Lazarus, he gives the biblical events an allegorical interpretation in which Lazarus symbolizes the sick Florentine nation. But what is the meaning of the four days during which Christ was delayed and did not come to cure Lazarus?

> These four days signify four illuminations which you Florence had. The first is the illumination of faith which was extinguished from your city; the second is the illumination of the good way of life; the third is that of the things to come which were predicted to you so many years in advance; the fourth is that of the reform and of your leaders.[202]

What does he mean in the fourth illumination? The answer is given immediately in the same sermon:

> It is now possible to understand it in another way, i.e., the first day was before you had liberty, when many were brought back to a good way of life; the second, when you were liberated from servitude.[203]

The divine illumination includes the political freedom and the freedom from the servitude which was part of the former regime; the spiritual illumination and the political illumination are unified in the divine illumination.

Savonarola many times in the sermons urges his audience to pray. Usually it is in a religious context, but in a sermon delivered on March 24, 1496, he says:

> You have to pray: pray now for the sake of the city, [pray] that God would bring it about that good magistrates will be elected, men who are good and prudent.[204]

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[202] *Ibid.*, p. 177: "Questi quattro dì significano quattro illuminazioni che tu Firenze hai avuto. Prima, la illuminazione della fede che era spenta nella tua città; la seconda, quella del ben vivere; la terza, quella delle cose future che ti sono state predette tanto inanzi; la quarta, quella della riformazione e del governarti."

[203] *Ibid.*: "Si può ancora pigliare in un altro modo, cioè il primo dì fu inanzi che tu avessi la libertà, che molti si redussono al ben vivere; el secondo, quando tu fusti liberato della servitù…"

[204] *Ibid.*, p. 319: "Voi dovete fare orazione: così pregate ancora per la città, che Dio faccia eleggere buoni magistrati e uomini che sieno buoni e prudenti."

The required prayer is a political one: such a use of the concept of prayer is again due to the fact that no separation exists between religion and politics.[205]

Another aspect of the inseparability between religion and politics is represented in the sermons through the essential combination of active and contemplative life. In a sermon delivered on March 18, 1496, Savonarola again deals with John 11—the resurrection of Lazarus. In the interpretation he presents here both sisters of Lazarus receive symbolic meaning:

> Thus Martha and Mary who signify the proficient and perfect ones in the active and in the contemplative life.[206]

We notice that perfection is related not only to the contemplative life, but also to the active life. The sick Lazarus signifies the better part of the Florentines[207] and he is being helped by both Martha and Mary, active and contemplative life. The connection between active and contemplative life is described by Savonarola in another sermon as an important part of the Scriptures.[208] In any case, the active life is not rejected here, as might have been expected from a narrow-minded and anti-humanist preacher. In fact, active and contemplative life complement each other and the preacher can ask his audience to assist one another in both ways.[209]

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[205] See also a similar case regarding the concept of penitence; *ibid.*, vol. 3a, pp. 214–215: "Io te lo denunzio, Italia e principi de Italia e prelati della Italia, che la spada viene e che non avete rimedio alcuno se non penitenzia, e nulla altro vi può giovare. Io vel denunzio, dico, un' altra volta, perchè non voglio averne a rendere ragione dinanzi al tribunale di Cristo. E tu, Firenze, che fai intelligenzie; io ti dico che tu, cittadino, che cerchi guastare il governo di Cristo, capiterai male; tu non lo vuoi credere, io ti annunzio che se tu non fai penitenzia, che tu camperai pochi anni…"

[206] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 173: "Marta adunque e Maria, che significano e li proficienti e li perfetti della vita attiva e contemplativa…" The theme was adopted from Augustine's sermon; see *PL*, 38, pp. 1188–1189.

[207] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

[208] *Ibid.*, p. 109: "… la Scrittura ha la parte contemplativa e la parte attiva; colui che è in grazia di Dio, contempla nella Scrittura la sapienzia e la bontà di Dio, e viene ad infiammarsi della cosa amata, cioè di Dio. Quanto alla vita attiva, perchè ogni agente ama la sua operazione, l'uomo contempla la Scrittura; si diletta di bene fare, e in ogni sua operazione della vita attiva si ricorda di Dio."

[209] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 53: "… così tu debbi adiutare el prossimo tuo, sì che concludo adunque che discorrendo tu in queste cose naturali, tu cavi frutto e quanto alla vita attiva e quanto alla contemplativa." Another example for the mutual perfection of active and contemplative life is presented in the symbolic interpretation of the names Ur and Aaron, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 308: "Ur vuol dire amore che sono quelli della vita attiva,

In a discussion of the active quality (*virtù attiva*) Savonarola presents the position of the philosophers, in which, in natural things, fire is warm because of the heat, which is an active quality. Similarly, in spiritual things, the light of divine illumination is active and the cause of good acts.[210] The active quality is thus common to both natural heat and divine illumination. It characterizes both the fire and the divine light that is worthy of praying for.[211] While the active quality can make us rise from the fire and reach for the divine light, contemplative life can be interpreted as the practice of a worthy life shown in the ideal of simplicity,[212] which obviously is not an ideal only for pagan philosophers.[213]

Accordingly Savonarola divides the animals in Noah's ark, which represent human beings, into two categories: the perfect who represent the contemplative life, and the profane who represent the active life. In any case, both categories are regarded as worthy of entering the ark and of salvation.[214] In the same way the preacher describes three kinds of people who come to the Mass: perfect-contemplative, the active, and those who have made penance.[215] The important thing is that all three come to the Mass and can get the divine grace.

Another way of presenting active and contemplative life as complementing each other is to remove them from a common danger: the passions; and thus:

> First, regarding active life, it must be purified of any passion, since the preachers are here in great danger.[216]

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che per amore e carità fanno l'opere caritative. Aaron sono e contemplativi e quali con l'orazioni aiuteranno, levate su le mani. Orsù, ognuno aiuti questo populo."

[210] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 55.

[211] *Ibid.*

[212] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 78: "*Praeterea*, la vita contemplativa vuole l'uomo semplicissimo. Confessono li filosofi che furono pagani che a volere esser buono filosofo e contemplare la verità, bisogna essere e vivere semplicissimo."

[213] *Ibid.*: "Pensa adunque quello debbe fare uno vero cristiano per potere contemplare Idio e il suo Cristo, e quanta semplicissima vita debbe tenere." See also Savonarola, *De simplicitate Christianae vitae*, ed. Pier Giorgio Ricci (Roma 1959).

[214] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 81: "… gli animali mondi, che significano gli uomini più puri, entrono nell'arca a sette a sette, cioè che debbino avere e sette doni dello Spirito Santo, e per gli uccelli similmente che erano sette e sette vuol dire el medesimo, e che siano elevati sempre ad alto come uccello in contemplazione; questi sono e contemplativi. E gli animali immondi che non sono così perfetti entrorno a dua a dua; questi significano quelli della vita attiva…"

[215] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 374.

[216] *Ibid.*, p. 27: "Prima, quanto alla vita attiva, sia purgato da ogni concupiscenzia, perchè li predicatori quassù sono in gran pericolo…"

> Most of all since the effort of preaching requires the intensive use of the body and it is most contrary to passions, both for the continuation of contemplation and for the effort of speaking.[217]

It is not a coincidence that the subject in both citations is the preacher, and I shall return to this shortly. Purifying active and contemplative life from passions brings them near one another, but what is the importance of purifying from passions? It is important in order to judge better in the active political life. Without such a purification our decisions would be ruled by emotions like revenge, which would prevent us from making right decisions in public life.[218] This is the point in which the relation between active and contemplative life is taking place: good actions are the consequence of good decisions, without emotions or passions, and they are the combination of active and contemplative life. Such a combination in the practical-public area is typical of a central figure in the Florentine public life: the preacher, whose figure is reflected in both the active men, who enlighten others and govern them, and in the contemplative men, who are practical examples of a worthy life.[219] The relation between the public status and the religious and social duty of the preacher and the harmonic connection between active and contemplative life is what constitutes for the

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[217] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 13: "… massime essendo la fatica del predicare molto consuntiva del corpo e molto contraria alla concupiscibile, sì per la continua contemplazione come per la fatica del dire."

[218] *Ibid.*, p. 397: "E però quando v'interviene che siate su ne' vostri magistrati o ne' vostri Consigli, vi bisogna essere liberi da ogni passione, se volete giudicare bene. Altrimenti tu ti metti in capo una guastada rossa, che tu non vedi se non colore rosso, *idest* tu non vedi se non vendetta e non puoi dare retto iudicio." In the historical context this was related to the idea of the common good which started in the north Italian communes in the beginning of the thirteenth century. The communes had turned their struggle against the violence of the noblemen into an ideal. This violence was mostly expressed in the *vendetta* which was an essential part of the ethos of the noblemen. This ethos was thus contrasted to the commonwealth purposed by the commune, which gave precedence to personal and familial honour. In order to survive, the commune had to stop the *vendetta*; See John Henderson, *Piety and Charity*… p. 18; Daniel R. Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence* (Georgia 1989), pp. 7–14. See also Carol Lansing, *The Florentine Magnates: Lineage and Faction in a Medieval Commune* (Princeton 1991).

[219] Savonarola, *Prediche*… vol. 3a, p. 51: "Alcuni sono comparati al cielo che ha in sè grande luce e gran moto e grande virtù: questi sono quegli della vita attiva che illuminano gli altri con la dottrina, e come e' cieli governono questi corpi inferiori, così loro governono e reggono li altri. Altri sono comparati alli angeli e sono quegli della vita contemplativa, e di questa tale simplicità parliamo noi, la quale hanno e' veri savi, li quali si domandono semplici, perchè quello che hanno nel cuore, hanno nella lingua e nelle opere e non sono doppi, e da questi si vorrìa imparare el ben vivere, perchè la vita loro è regola del ben vivere."

preacher the possibility of introducing critical political positions in late fifteenth-century Florence. The combination of the active and the contemplative in the public area is thus represented most perfectly by the preacher. And so contemplative life receives a practical meaning: to help the preacher to influence his listeners.[220] The divine illumination must contain practical knowledge for the preacher: what he should say to his audience. Savonarola discusses a practical problem for the preacher: how can he persuade so many different and contrasted wills? The answer is that through prayer and contemplation the preacher is related to the Holy Spirit and he thus learns the most efficient way to preach. Savonarola emphasizes the practical and technical side, and this is contrasted to the fact that the preacher is being taught directly by the Holy Spirit, pure spirituality. The problem that was raised is not only about the technical issue of how to preach, but also about what to preach. The answer is supplied only from the technical side: *lo Spirito Santo lo inclina a dire in quel modo che faccia frutto*. This is the only way, and without it the preacher is going to fail. Savonarola puts a very practical question to the contemplative life regarding the essence of preaching: in which way should the preacher speak in order to persuade? Thus, contemplative life becomes an essential part of the preacher's practice. In the same way the Scriptures must be used by the preacher as weapons in the struggle for the souls of his listeners.[221] The action of the preacher should be regarded as stamping or pressing (*imprimere*) his words in his audience's intellect. The Scriptures should supply the preacher with examples from nature for binding his listeners to supreme things. The

[220] *Ibid*., vol. 3b, p. 27: "… quanto alla vita contemplativa, e che stia in continua orazione e sia amico di Dio; e per questa cagione narra el sacro Evangelio che 'l Salvatore, avendo a venire a predicare nel tempio e a disputare colli farisei, andò prima in sul monte Oliveto; il monte significa l' orazione, la quale ci eleva suso alti a Dio. Dacci adunque il Salvatore esempio, andando in sul monte, che 'l predicatore debba andare all'altezza della perfezione della vita spirituale, e andare all'orazione inanzi che vada a predicare, e debba stare in sul monte della contemplazione, donde lui abbia illuminazione di quel che abbia a dire al populo, perchè egli è impossibile che essendo qua tanti cuori e diverse voluntà, che 'l predicatore possa dire cosa che faccia frutto ad ognuno e che truovi ognuno, se non ha la illuminazione di sopra. Ma quando elli sta in orazione e in contemplazione, lo Spirito Santo lo inclina a dire in quel modo che faccia frutto, e se non si fa a questo modo, io ti dico che altrimenti le predicazioni sono gittate via."

[221] *Ibid*., p. 253: "El turcasso del predicatore è la Sacra Scrittura; l'asta sua sono e' iudicii di Dio e' quali si sentono sonare sopra il cavallo, e quando trae con l'asta, quando tira con le sagitte, passa el core di quello e di quell'altro."

use of the verb 'pressing' emphasizes the practical aspect of the activity of the preacher.[222]

The unity of the contemplative and the active represented by the preacher reaches its culmination in Savonarola's sermons through the willingness of the Florentine preacher to sacrifice himself and die. Savonarola is gradually developing this idea in his sermons. Such a sacrifice is, in fact, the total unity between the contemplative and the active: death as the unity with God and as the realization of the Christian ideal of eternal life on the one hand, and death as a sacrifice which begets practical fruits in the world according to the model of Christ on the other. It is obvious that the development of this idea was another stage in the increasing struggle between Savonarola and pope Alexander VI and the rest of his foes, and it only appeared in the later sermons, since 1496. Side by side with his increasing power Savonarola developed ways of struggling for his ideas. This unity and willingness to die enabled Savonarola to act in a more decisive way in order to reinforce his influence on the Florentines. The struggle concerning the nature of political life in Florence is now taking a fatal and tragic path, best represented by the friar and preacher of San Marco.

Savonarola establishes a relation between preaching and war and turns war into a criterion for distinguishing between Christ's preachers and the devil's preachers.[223] No doubt, Savonarola is using one of his foes' defamations—that he was the devil's preacher—and turns the war into a criterion. The continuing war imposed on him is thus an indication that he is Christ's representative in this war. But war is now taking place not only on the spiritual and apocalyptic level; it is a concrete war in Florence concerning the very nature of political life in the city, its legislation, and the establishment of institutions. This is a political war which has an immediate effect on the citizenry. To this internal political war we should add the war which is taking place in Italy because of the invasion of Charles VIII: the Italian league which

[222] *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

[223] *Ibid.*, p. 254: "Fratelli miei, io dico alli miei frati, se volete esser predicatori, presupponete d' aver guerra. O voi sarete predicatori del diavolo o di Cristo; se volete essere di Cristo presupponete d' avere guerra; e' non ne va la robba qua, ma ne va la vita. Dico che ti bisogna avere animo e aver caro d'esser morto per lo amore di Cristo, e se tu ti truovi a questo punto, tu puoi andar qua a tua posta." For a more general discussion of the concept of war in Savonarola see Jean-Claude Zancarini, 'Far guerra con la pace nel croce—la guerra nelle prediche di Girolamo Savonarola', in Garfagnini [ed.], *Savonarola—democrazia*… pp. 43–51.

was founded against the French king is causing a problem to Florence, which now has an agreement with Charles; this is another reason for the Florentines to worry. Savonarola concretizes the consequences and dangers inherent in the war for his listeners: in war you not only lose property but also life. Thus, the willingness to die in a war for Christ becomes a necessary condition for being a true preacher. This relation enabled Savonarola to be even more influential on the Florentine scene. The word *guerra* has an immediate meaning in a Florentine context, and it is threatening both the community and individuals. In such an atmosphere[224] Savonarola's references to his own sacrifice become very effective:

> Tell me: was San Peter the martyr not killed by the Florentines and by their order and money? This is God's reward to his instruments; I shall have the same reward. You know that when he [San Peter] was close to his death he delivered a public sermon in which he said that his death was ordained and that he was already being paid his reward. Do you believe that San Peter the martyr would have said such a thing in public unless he was informed by God?[225]

By referring to San Peter the martyr Savonarola relates his situation to San Peter's.[226] Just like Christ who talked about his approaching death when he was close to his crucifixion, so was San Peter. And just like them Savonarola now is announcing in public his own approaching death. As we have already seen, this death is the combination of the contemplative and the active and it enabled Savonarola to act and preach in a way that the Florentines could not ignore.

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[224] Let us recall Savonarola's remarks in the sermons that there is nothing to be afraid of. See e.g., *Predice*… vol. 3b, p. 151; *Prediche sopra Ezechiele*… vol. 1, pp. 192–193; *Prediche sopra L'Esodo*… vol. 1, pp. 8–9, 32. These repeated remarks are an indication that there is a lot of fear among the audience. This fear is caused by the internal and external political drama and it is part of the continuos crisis in the Florence of these years.

[225] Savonarola, *Prediche*… vol. 3b, p. 161: "Dimmi: san Pier martire, non fu e' morto da' Fiorentini e con loro ordine e lor danari? Questo è il pagamento che dà Idio alli instrumenti suoi; a me venga questo pagamento. Tu sai che quando lui fu prossimo alla morte, publicamente predicando disse che gli era ordinato la morte sua e che gli era già fatto il pagamento. Credi tu che san Piero martire avessi detto simil cosa in publico se non l'avessi avuta da Dio?"

[226] Savonarola is referring to Peter of Verona, a Dominican friar who was sent by the pope to Florence and acted there against heretics; as a revenge for his actions he was murdered in 1252 and was declared a saint by the Church. See Robert Davidsohn, *Storia di Firenze*, trans. Giovanni Battista Klein and Roberto Palmarocchi, 8 vols. (Firenze 1956), vol. 2, pp. 403–404. See also chapter one, n. 214.

The juncture between the contemplative and the active is present in the public area of good decisions. Regarding this, Savonarola describes a special quality of the preacher:

> The preacher smells with his nose the decisions and terror of God, when war and difficulties are coming.[227]

The preacher has a special quality in the area of good decisions, a quality which originated from a relation with God himself. But what exactly is this relation? Savonarola presents a continuity reaching from the body and the soul with its different parts, which are still absorbed in the active and material area, towards the contemplative area and the first truth—God. This continuity or hierarchy has also something to do with government:

> The body is then subjected to the soul, the vegetative part of the soul to the sensitive part, and the sensitive part to the intellectual part; the intellectual part [is subjected] to the contemplative, and the contemplative to the truth. And among the contemplative parts the principal one is that of the first truth, i.e., God, and in this way the less noble parts are subjected to the more noble.[228]

This structure, in which the less noble parts are subjected to the more noble parts, is a well-known classical *topos*. But here, this is also a matter of political practice. It is not a coincidence that such a practice is described side by side with a description of the relation between the active and the contemplative—a relation which, as we have seen previously, enabled the preacher to be certain regarding the right decisions in the public area. The preacher, who represents the unity of the contemplative and the active, acts in the public area. His special status enables him to act out of a critical position; his purpose is to obtain good fruits, i.e., good deeds, from his audience. Out of the dramatic context of the sermons we can learn about the contents of the good decisions and about the details of the political practice, i.e., the contents of the political critique. Two sermons which were delivered in February 24 and 25 (from which I have just quoted), 1496, include a clear presentation of these critical contents. It is not possible to ignore

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[227] Savonarola, *Prediche*… vol. 3b, p. 252: "… il predicatore odora col naso suo li iudicii e il terrore di Dio, quando viene la guerra e le tribulazioni."

[228] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 209: "… il corpo poi è ordinato alla anima, e l'anima vegetativa alla sensitiva, e la sensitiva alla intellettiva, e la intellettiva alla contemplazione, e la contemplazione alla verità. E tra le contemplazioni la principale è quella della prima verità, cioè di Dio, e a questo modo la parte manco nobile è ordinata alla più nobile."

the political context of these sermons: February 25, 1496, was the election day for the new *Signoria*. Because of that, these sermons are very intensive: they give the preacher an excellent opportunity in a perfect timing to persuade more citizens.

The political context led Savonarola in these two sermons to discuss the question, what is the best way of ruling. After a short discussion of the importance of grace, Savonarola states that a great grace had been bestowed on Florence: it was released from servitude. This servitude is identified with the figure of a tyrant and with a tyrannical regime.[229] The development of a tyrannical regime is described in very dark colours.[230] The tyrant and his regime thus represent all that is evil and destructive in a government. The description here is, in fact, a total demonization of the tyrant and tyranny.[231] Thus, for instance, all values are being negated by the tyrant: love, common good, friendship, peace, truth, and faith. Instead, the tyrant prefers hate, jealousy, evil, corruption, hypocrisy, and false glory.[232] Savonarola emphasizes the breaking of promises and trust under a tyrannical regime in trying to touch on a delicate point for Florentine society: the merchants and bankers whose economic survival was based on trust.[233] The conclusion is that a tyrant is an absolute evil for all the parts of society. If there is somebody who still does not know of whom he is speaking, Savonarola explains:

> You know what was going on in the time of Cosimo.[234]

Savonarola was thus describing sixty years of Medici regime in Florence. He reminded his audience that this is not a theoretical discussion concerning governments; it is rather part of the struggle which is now taking place regarding the whole nature of political life. The Medici supporters are everywhere in Florence, and thus tyranny is still a concrete option in the city and tomorrow is the election day for the new *Signoria*.

On the next day Savonarola opens his sermon with a discussion of the purpose of any regime.[235] He repeats the conclusions of the previous sermon and states that the tyrant is the devil:

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[229] *Ibid.*, p. 184.
[230] *Ibid.*: "E sappi prima che 'l governo del tiranno comincia da cattivo e poi viene a peggiore e poi a peggiore e in ultimo viene a pessimo…"
[231] *Ibid.*, pp. 188–190.
[232] *Ibid.*, p. 189.
[233] *Ibid.*, p. 192.
[234] *Ibid.*, p. 199: "Tu sai al tempo di Cosimo quello che fu fatto…"
[235] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

> Do you want to be a tyrant or to elect a tyrant or to follow a tyrant? What do you think about it? To me a tyrant seems like a devil or even worse than a devil.[236]

The preacher then moves on to discuss the essence of man as a rational creature, and contrasts it to the non-rational nature of the tyrant. He states that all plants and animals are directed towards man by their essence, citing Aristotle, *Physics* II. At this point he describes the structure which connects the body and the soul to the first truth—God, and side by side with this he posits the political practice according to which it is worthy that the less noble would be governed by the more noble.[237] What can we thus conclude from this regarding the contents of the political practice? The dramatic context stresses the negative aspects of the tyrant. This is the emphasis in both sermons. The conclusion is that the tyrant is the worse thing from every aspect: moral, religious, and political. He should not rule the city. The nature of the political life of Florence must be changed, and the popular regime and its institutions should be regarded as superior to, and more noble than, the tyrant. They should replace him.

In the next section I shall discuss the concepts of autonomy, reform and its modification towards renovation in Savonarola's apologetic writings against the background of the changing attitude towards his reform on the part of the Roman curia.

4. *The Notion of Reform: The Transition from Theology to Politics*

Calls for reform in the Church have been known since antiquity; in the first decades of the fifteenth century we have, as we have noted in the introduction, a new wave of such calls, for many reasons. Caroli and Savonarola should both be considered as followers of Dominici and Antonino in the tradition of fifteenth-century Florentine reformers. The Neapolitan cardinal Oliviero Carafa (1430–1511) acted for his own reform of the Dominican Order and the Roman curia at the same time in which Savonarola acted in Florence.[238] It seems that everyone

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[236] *Ibid.*, pp. 208–209: "Vuoi tu esser tiranno o fare tiranno o seguitano el tiranno? Che ti pare di questo? A me pare uno diavolo e peggio ancora che uno diavolo."

[237] *Ibid.*, p. 209.

[238] Romeo De Maio, *Savonarola e la curia romana* (Roma 1969), pp. 19–20. See also regarding the reform in the Vallumbrosan congregation of 1484 on pp. 79–98, and the

in the Christian world is concerned with the required and most suitable reform. But Savonarola's reform in Florence had begun to attract much attention, especially since 1494, due to both theological and political issues.

It seems that the autonomy of a monastery and its reform are strongly related; and thus, this autonomy was regarded as opposed to the unity of the order.[239] This autonomy is regarded as an essential stage which could enable one to conduct a reform. This pattern is common to both Caroli's and Savonarola's programme of reform. But while Caroli failed in his struggle for the autonomy of Santa Maria Novella, Savonarola was successful, at least for a short time, in his struggle against the general of his Order Gioacchino Torriani, the protector of the Order cardinal Carafa, and pope Alexander VI Borgia, for the autonomy of San Marco and its new congregation (which included also two more convents: San Domenico in Fiesole and Santa Caterina in Pisa). Yet we have to distinguish between an institutional autonomy, e.g., autonomy from the congregation (or leaving a larger congregation and establishing a new one which is smaller and local) in the case of Savonarola, or autonomy from the master general of the Order and from a common reform programme in the case of Caroli, and a more theoretical notion of autonomy, e.g., an autonomy from the authority of the Doctors of the Church and of the mainstream of scholastic theology. We can find in both Caroli and Savonarola an emphasis on local heroes and local history instead of the famous figures of scholastic tradition. But while Caroli was struggling for an autonomy and a reform of his monastery, Savonarola continued by struggling towards a renovation of the whole city and Church, and thus they end up as leaders of two opposing forces.

Even though it is tempting to present a detailed comparison between Caroli's and Savonarola's notion of the reform, it is not the purpose of this section. In this section I would rather like to focus on Savonarola's notion of the reform and its significance in terms of the theological and political tensions and the evolution of a new humanist theology.

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commission *de reformanda ecclesia* appointed by Alexander VI on pp. 110–119; 133–146. On some Florentine humanist astrological aspirations for reform in Christianity around 1484, see Hankins, *Plato*… vol. 1, pp. 302–304. See also John F. D'Amico's remark in his *Renaissance Humanism*… p. 212: "No topic so fully occupied the minds of religious thinkers in the quattro- and early cinquecento as the state of the Church and the need for its reformation", and his discussion on pp. 212–237.

[239] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

The separation from the Lombard congregation was approved by the pope on May 22, 1493, and again on August 14, 1494, and rescinded, about a year later, reuniting San Marco with the Lombard congregation, on September 8, 1495.[240] This last document was also a personal attack on Savonarola and his pretensions,[241] quite a change,

[240] These papal documents were cited and discussed in Armando F. Verde and Ellettra Giaconi, 'Apologeticum conventus s. marci florentiae', in *Rinascimento* XXXVII (1997), pp. 67–154; see especially pp. 68–72; the document of September 8, was published on pp. 118–121. The document of August 14 was only mentioned by Roberto Ubaldini in his *Annalia conventus sancti marci* published in De Maio, *Savonarola*… pp. 180–181 (and see De Maio's remark on p. 52: "È una disgrazia, per questa storia, non possedere il testo del breve di unione"). The document of May 22, approving the foundation of the new congregation, and another one, rescinding it, annulling its autonomy and uniting San Marco to yet a new Tuscan-Roman congregation, dated November 7, 1496, were published in the appendix of Villari, *La storia*… vol. I, pp. xlij-xliv and pp. cxlij-cxlv. See also more documents regarding the separation in Alessandro Gherardi [ed.], *Nuovi documenti e studi intorno a Girolamo Savonarola* (Firenze 1887), pp. 41–69; De Maio, *Savonarola*… pp. 177–179; the document of September 8, together with the pope's letter to the general vicar of the Lombard congregation is in Paolo Luotto, *Il vero Savonarola e il Savonarola di L. Pastor* (Firenze 1897), pp. 605–608. For the relations between Savonarola and Alexander VI see Ciacinto A. Scaltriti, *L'ultimo Savonarola: Esame giuridico-teologico del carteggio (brevi e lettere) intercorsi tra Papa Alessandro VI e il Frate Girolamo Savonarola* (Roma 1976). For the later influence of Savonarola's reform see Domenico Di Agresti, *Sviluppi della riforma monastica savonaroliana* (Città di Castello 1980). This separation and reform, which were inseparable from the religious crisis, were regarded as crucial for the relations between Savobarola and the Roman curia. See Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *Vita*… pp. 25–26: "Commesse ancora contro a sé Hieronimo frati et monache et quasi tutti et religiosi, perché la loro tepidezza et cattiva usanza riprendeva, et le insidie et calumnie de' suoi medesimi frati predicatori non possette fuggire, perché con l'autorità del Papa la congregatione di Toscana da quella di Lombardia haveva separato et per comandamento di Dio in essa s'era posto. Questo separarsi attribuiscono a superbia et ambitione, biasimando quello che sommamente dovevono lodare, imperoché la separatione per buone cagioni fece per diversi costumi et vari modi di vivere delle provincie, et perché con più pace uniti stanno in una natione che di diversi paesi. Voleva i suoi frati tenessero il modo di vivere, il qual San Domenico osservato haveva, et stato era da tutto l'ordine accettato et confermato, benché alcuni a questi tempi molte cose scorrere lasciassino, le quali egli vedeva essere da le lor leggi et constitutioni proibite, massime d'havere possessioni, della qual cosa egli si doleva et cercava al suo potere levarla. Pareva questa separatione molto difficile, repugnando et contradicendo molti et grandi huomini et del medesimo ordine. Predisse nondimeno dovere essere et indi molti beni et commodi al santo vivere utili. A questo da Dio era mosso et instigato, essendo da quello eletto a rinnovare il fervore cristiano con l'esempio publico della buona vita et col predicare, et a predire la purgatione et la riforma della Chiesa nella città, la quale è di alti ingegni ripiena et quasi come il core dell'Italia, accioché i cittadini fiorentini, i quali con le loro mercantie varie parti del mondo girano, la voce profetica non solo per la Italia, ma per tutto seminassino."

[241] Verde and Giaconi, 'Apologeticum…' p. 119: "Sane Hieronymum quemdam Savonarola de Ferraria Ordinis Praedicatorum, novitate pravi dogmatis delectatum acce-

both in tone and in contents, from the document of May 22.[242] The reasons for this radical change are rooted in personal temperament, internal power relations in the curia between the pope and cardinal Carafa, and international diplomacy which involved Rome, Florence, Naples, Milan, and France.[243] But I would like to focus on another aspect of this change.

These opposing decisions by the pope signified for Savonarola the transition from an ideal image of theology to politics; from absolute knowledge to limited human knowledge which is, by its very nature, bound to probability and to the possibility of error. And so, the real obedience to the truth can be seen as disobedience by the same logic as that of *stultitia crucis*. These opposing decisions showed the preacher what Valla, during the council of Florence, had found out: the relativ-

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pimus et in eam mentis insaniam Italicarum rerum commutatione deductum ut se missum a Deo et cum Deo loqui sine ulla canonica attestatione fateatur in populo contra canonicas sanctiones"; p. 120: "Credebamus post aliquod tempus iam advenisse diem qui de ipso meliora concipere deberemus ac dolorem, quem nunc usque ex effreni arrogantia sua et scandalosa separatione a patribus suis Lombardiae perpessi fueramus, quae subdola calliditate, sicut post cognovimus, perversorum quorundam fratrum impetrata est, amodo ex sua humili adhaerentia in laetitiam commutaremus sed, quod dolenter referimus, spe nostra frustrati sumus." Yet a more moderate critique and warning by the pope, together with the famous invitation to come to Rome, which was never accepted by Savonarola, dated July 21, 1495, is on pp. 113–114; see, e.g., p. 113: "Et quum nuper nobis relatum est te postmodum in publicis sermonibus tuis dixisse ea quae populo etiam futura nuntias non a te ipso aut humana sapientia, sed divina revelatione dicere, iccrico cupientes, sicut nostro pastorali officio competit, super his tecum loqui et ex ore tuo audire, ut quod placitum est Deo melius per te cognoscentes peragamus, hortamur et mandamus tibi in virtute sacrae obedientiae ut quam primum ad nos venias."

[242] Villari, *La storia*… vol. I, pp. xlij-xliij: "Exigit vestrae devotionis affectus, nec non religionis zelus, ut petitionibus vestris, quibus possitis Deo quietiori mente servire, quantum cum Deo possumus, favorabiliter annuamus. Cum itaque, sicut Nobis, nuper, tam pro parte vestra quam dilectorum filiorum Communitatis Florentinae expositum fuit, vos, qui alias, sub Protectore et Magistro generali Ordinis vestri fratrum Praedicatorum existebatis, et processu temporis, cum vos ac Domum vestram, dilectorum filiorum Congregationis Lombardiae dicti Ordinis gubernationi tantummodo commendavissetis; post aliquantum temporis, Prior quidam, tunc ipsius Domus vestrae, praetextu quarundam literarum apostolicarum in forma Brevis, per eum a Sede Apostolica obtentarum et clam vobis impetratarum, ipso tantum, et uno, aut forsan paulo pluribus illius fratribus consciis, secumque consentientibus, dictae Congregationi ac illius Superioribus et institutionibus vos, et Domum vestram subjicere attentavit; cupiatis, ut Deo quietius possitis famulari, et alias ex certis causis, a praedictis Congregatione et Praesidentibus, illius institutionibus et ordinationibus eximi et liberari…"

[243] De Maio, *Savonarola*… pp. 17, 25, 28–29, 73; Verde and Giaconi, 'Apologeticum…' p. 73.

ity of the theological tradition and Church decisions from a historical perspective. This is exactly what Pico presents in his *Apologia*, discussed in chapter four, regarding the scholastic theology. This theological tension was exposed by a humanist theology which aspired to sharpen the boundary between the human and the divine in order to save religion from probability, but also in order to define better and to legitimize the place of human process and skills. The transition from theology to politics is also the place where a transformation of the theological crisis into a political crisis occurred, and it seems that both aspects of the crisis reached their culmination with Savonarola. He was insisting on the realization of his ideal spiritual reform which included a renovation of the whole Church, on the theological level, and on his loyalty to the agreement with the French and to the new popular regime in Florence, against the policy and interests of many of the powerful Italian rulers including the pope, many of whom were supporters the Medici, on the political level. On a more practical level, we must note yet another aspect of this crisis: the crisis of authority which was very relevant for a preacher with such a renovation programme as Savonarola's. Even though we do not know what exactly was included in Savonarola's formal authority in regard to the reform, he soon began to act in a very decisive way.[244] His vision included more than conducting a reform in some Dominican convents; but in order to carry out his vision of a whole renovation of the city and the Church he needed much more authority than he must have obtained both by the papal formal approval of his reform and by his charismatic sermons and personality. The preacher still had many powerful foes both in Florence and in Rome. Under the impression of his temporal victory in the Roman curia Savonarola composed, on July 26, 1495, his *Compendium revelationum*, written both in Latin and in the vernacular (the Italian version was first published in August 18, 1495, followed, a month and a half later, by the Latin version), a composition in which, in its very beginning, he presented himself as a divinely-inspired preacher, and in fact, as a divinely-inspired prophet.[245] Savonarola felt that this was the right

[244] *Ibid.*, pp, 51–55.

[245] Savonarola, *Compendio di rivelazioni (testo volgare e latino) e Dialogus de veritate prophetica*, ed. Angela Crucitti (Roma 1974), pp. 129–130: "Etsi multo tempore diversimode per divinam inspirationem plura futura praedixi, tamen, animo revolvens sententiam Salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi dicentis: *Nolite sanctum dare canibus, nec mittatis margaritas vestras ante porcos, ne forte conculcent eas pedibus suis et canes conversi dirumpant vos*, semper fui in dicendo parcior nec ulterius progressus sum quam expedire saluti hominum

moment to violate Christ's dictum and he openly and accurately presented his *sanctae margaritae*, i.e., his prophecies, and thus, moved on with his programme of renovation, which apparently required the authority of a preaching prophet. The status of the preacher as a mediator between the contemplative and the active seems similar to the function of the light of prophecy: to mediate between divine and human matters.[246] This is how the preacher and the prophet were getting closer to each other, joining forces against the approaching *malignitas*. I have introduced in section three some of the strategies for acquiring authority used by Savonarola in his sermons, and I shall deal with this issue again in section five, in regard to the authority of the preaching prophet and the contents of his vision. But let us follow Savonarola's discussion in the *Compendium*.

While describing the way in which the supernatural light of God inspires the prophet through revelations, Savonarola presents the angels as mediators between God and men; but then, the angels become angelic spirits which enlighten and carry the imagination of the prophet towards different apparitions, but they also appeal inwardly to the prophets. Through the supernatural light the prophets understand that they have been inspired and have heard truthful things which were derived from divine wisdom.[247] This description is an interesting admix-

videretur. Propterea paucae admodum conclusiones nostrae fuerunt, quamvis exhortationes, persuasiones et probationes ad earum credulitatem inducendam plurimae fuerint; numquam tamen visionum modum ac multitudinem et alias multas revelationes aperui, cum nec inspiraret hoc mihi Spiritus Sanctus nec necessarium ad salutem arbitrarer nec, demum, ad eas suscipiendas hominum mentes dispositas iudicarem. Nunc autem ad scribendum quaedam futura a me publice praedicata, praesertim potiora et maioris ponderis, necessitas impulit: tum quia multi, qui, me ex pulpito pronuntiante, ea describere conati sunt, non integram veritatem sed conscissam et plerumque multis falsitatibus admixtam, non sufficiente scilicet calamo celeritati linguae, annotarunt; tum quia nonnulli aut non sano intellectu aut sinistra interpretatione et malignitate addendo, subtrahendo, saepe depravando, dicta mea in vulgus sparserunt. Itaque brevi compendio quaecumque de rebus futuris a me hactenus publice praedicata sunt, colligere conabor, omittens uniuscuiusque harum revelationum specialem modum et Sacrae Scripturae probationes, quas dum praedicarem adhibui." For the details of the text see pp. 379–386.

[246] *Ibid.*, p. 131: "… quamquam, mediante lumine prophetiae, etiam alia multa ab humana cognitione non distantia propheta percipit: ipsum namquam lumen, quemadmodum ad divina, sic etiam multo magis ad humana pertingere potest."

[247] *Ibid.*, pp. 133–134: "Cum igitur inter Deum et homines angeli medii sint, ab ipso Deo illuminationes propheticae per angelicos spiritus subministrantur, qui non tantum ad diversas apparitiones interius phantasiam illustrant et commovent, sed etiam intrinsecus prophetas alloquuntur; quibus etiam saepenumero exterius se in humana

ture of Christian notions with Neoplatonic flavour like *angelici spiritus* and the verb *emanare*. We can think of Ficino's *spiritus* as well as many other ancient and mediaeval Christian and Neoplatonic sources. The need for mediators between the human and the divine (and between the one and the many in Neoplatonic doctrine) is reconciled through the angels or the angelic spirits which, as we shall see in section five, can also be partially compared to the preachers.

The crisis described by Savonarola in the *Compendium* is no doubt political and ecclesiastical; it concerns the whole of Italy, the Church, and the world outside the Church and its rulers.[248] Such a total crisis required much more than the modest reform that, for the time being, was approved. Italy has sinned, and this includes both rulers and ecclesiastics; the crisis, best illustrated by the invasion of Charles VIII, is regarded as a divine punishment for these sins. Here, again, we find the required prophet, the truthful mediator who can warn and save those who were elected by God. But who are they? They are the Florentines.[249] Savonarola is reconstructing every moment since his second arrival in the city with these apocalyptic and determinist notions of the renovation of the Church after the stroke of the divine whip.[250] It is all part of the divine plan which now, even under the shadow of a concrete

figura exhibent, futura praenuntiantes et de multis peragendis eos instruentes. Et per lumen supradictum prophetae aperte cognoscunt eas apparitiones esse angelorum, et ea quae iidem angeli loquuntur esse vera et a sapientia divina emanare."

[248] *Ibid.*, p. 134: "Prospiciens itaque omnipotens Deus Italiae pecata praesertim in principibus tam ecclesiasticis quam saecularibus multiplicari, nec ea diutius ferre valens, statuit Ecclesiam suam ingenti flagello expiare."

[249] *Ibid.*: "Et quoniam, ut inquit Amos propheta [3, 7], *non faciet Dominus Deus verbum, nisi revelaverit secretum suum ad servos prophetas*, voluit, propter electorum suorum salutem, id flagellum in Italia praenuntiatum iri, ut, praemoniti, ad tolerantiam sese firmius praepararent. Cumque Florentia, veluti cor in homine, in medio Italiae sita sit, eam ad huiusmodi praeconium suscipiendum eligere Deus ipse dignatus est, ut inde illud per ceteras Italiae partes, quemadmodum in praesentia videmus impletum, late diffundatur."

[250] *Ibid.*, pp. 134–135: "Me itaque, inter alios servos suos indignum et inutilem, ad hoc ministerium eligens, Florentiam ex mandato patrum memorum venire curavit anno Domini MCCCCLXXXIX; quo quidem anno, Calendis Augusti, die dominico, coepi in templo nostro Sancti Marci publice librum Apocalypsis interpretari. Et per totum eundem annum Florentino populo praedicans, tria continue proposui: primum, renovationem Ecclesiae his temporibus futuram; secundum, grande flagellum universae Italiae ante talem renovationem Deum illaturum esse; tertium, haec duo cito futura." On Savonarola's teachings of the Apocalypse see Armando F. Verde, 'Le lezioni o i sermoni sull' 'Apocalisse' di Girolamo Savonarola (1490)', in *Memorie Domenicane* 19 (1988), pp. 5–109.

crisis, it seems that it will have a happy end. Thus, the *Compendium* is certainly not a historical account of past events and was never meant to be.[251] It is rather the story of a certain revealed truth, a secret which is now first presented and which is the key to understanding the reality at present, on all levels, aspects, complexity, and significance. Now is the time for the preacher, who is a true prophet of God, to face the crisis with his full divine powers. The preaching prophet is delivering both a threat of a total catastrophe and a promise for the only possible salvation. Those who oppose him are opposing the divine plan. He is the hero of this story, and through him and his renovation alone the salvation could be guaranteed. This is the framework of the *Compendium*, which includes, in its inner parts, detailed descriptions and reports of revelations and prophecies which are related to the present crisis.[252] The renovation or reformation of both the city and the Church are at the centre of these visions.[253] But this was only a temporary victory. Savonarola soon had to confront the changed attitude towards his activity and reform. Very soon he had to face his concrete enemies.

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[251] The idea that the *Compendium* is a historical account was well refuted by Weinstein, having been uncritically used as such by many historians and biographers. See Weinstein, *Savonarola*… pp. 68–78.

[252] See e.g., Savonarola, *Compendio*… pp. 138–139: "Vidi itaque anno millesimo quadringentesimo et nonagesimo secundo, nocte praecedente ultimam meam declamationem adventus Domini in templo Sanctae Reparatae, manum in caelo cum ense, cui inscriptum erat: 'Gladius Domini super terram cito et velociter'; super manum autem inerat: 'Vera et iusta sunt iudicia Domini'; ipsius vero manus brachium egredi videbatur a tribus in una luce faciebus, quarum prima ait:—Iniquitas sanctuarii mei clamat ad me de terra—; secunda respondit:—Visitabo ergo in virga iniquitates eorum et in verberibus peccata eorum—; tertia subiunxit:—Misericordiam meam non dispergam ab eo, neque nocebo in veritate mea, et miserabor pauperi et inopi—. Rursus prima inquit:—Oblitus est populus meus mandatorum meorum diebus innumeris—; secunda respondit:—Conteram ergo et confringam et non miserebor—; tertia subiunxit:—Memor ero ambulantium in praeceptis meis—. Deinde vox ingens ex tribus faciebus super universo orbe simul intonuit, dicens:—Audite, omnes habitatores terrae. Haec dicit Dominus: Ego Dominus loquor in zelo sancto meo. Ecce, dies venient et gladium meum evaginabo super vos. Convertimini ergo ad me, antequam compleatur furor meus. Tunc enim, angustia superveniente, requiretis pacem, et non veniet."

[253] *Ibid.*, p. 149: "In huiusmodi propositum plures alias visiones multo clariores suscepi, sicut etiam in aliis rebus a me praenuntiatis, praesertim circa Ecclesiae renovationem et flagellum, multis visionibus et certissimis illustrationibus per diversa tempora confirmatus sum"; p. 150: "… ubi his tribus armis, non sine miraculo, e maximis periculis civitati nostrae Florentinae et populo universo imminentibus saepe liberati sumus, cum etiam ipsius civitatis reformationem et pacem et plura alia, praeter humanae sapientiae opinionem et communem fere omnium existimationem, in summa contradictione obtinuerimus."

And indeed, the first reaction to the change in the pope's attitude, the *Apologeticum conventus S. Marci Florentiae* of 1495, opens with an understandable astonishment:

> Who would not wonder regarding the change in this very recent attitude from the previous one, and at how suddenly white has turned into black? And that he who not too long ago was considered in the eyes of the pope someone *who works in the vineyard of the Lord Sabaot* by the report of many, and was approved and recommended by the same pope, soon before being questioned was considered a defendant and impious man, and, moreover, a command was issued to entrust the [conduct of] the case to his adversary—as we shall show in the right place.[254]

This rhetorical but also, so I believe, authentic astonishment, soon turned into a refutation, chapter and verse, of the papal attack. But this astonishment indicates that, despite everything which everyone knew about this pope, it was still a shock. Anyhow, the strategy here was not a direct counter-attack on the pope.

The first move in this refutation was to distinguish between the pope and those who were considered responsible for this document, i.e., some advisers in the Roman curia. The second move was to show the obvious vicious intentions of these advisers, clearly presented in the document, in regard to the convent of San Marco and its prior, and thus, the invalidity of this document.[255]

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[254] Verde and Giaconi, 'Apologeticum…' p. 121: "Quam dissimilis sit novissimus hic tenor a praecedenti et quam repente candidum in nigrum versum sit quis non miretur?, ut is qui paulo ante *in vinea Domini Sabaot laborans* [Is 16, 8; Rom 9, 29] multorum relatu apud Pontificem probatus et ab eodem commendatus fuerat, mox priusquam interrogatus uti reus et sacrilegus habeatur, insuper adversario causam committi—ut suo loco dicemus—impetratum sit."

[255] *Ibid.*, pp. 121–122: "Sed quis non videat haec potius ex arbitrio et fraude malignantium imposita esse quam ex nutu Pontificis proprio emanasse, cuius mens recta semper et integra praesumenda cum ab exterioris inscriptionis exordio usque ad internae narrationis totius finem omnia mendaciis referta sint? Primo siquidem ignorari potest quo Breve hoc dirigatur cum in ipsa inscriptione dicatur: *Dilectis filiis Priori et conventui Monasterii Sanctae Crucis Ordinis Praedicatorum in civitate Florentiae*, in qua nec monasterii appellatio nec titulus Sanctae Crucis ex Ordine Praedicatorum reperitur sed Sancti Marci conventus, et ipsum quem nominat in contextu *Hieronymum quemdam* videtur nescire loci Priorem, cum tamen alias ad eum scripserit et de eo saepius verba fecerit; sic adversariorum malitia se ipsam confundit. Sed esto ut hoc scriptoris incuria negligatur. Discutiamus singula capita narrationis ubi quot fere verba tot falso suggesta apertissime probabuntur; quapropter surrecticium Breve hoc et nullius validitatis esse constabit"; p. 134: "Nec erubuerunt impudentissimi homines tanti viri laedere dignitatem dum caeco ducti furore prophana omnia sibi licere putaverunt, postquam etiam Summi Pontificis maiestatem fuccis obumbrare ausi sunt."

In between the discussion of the nature of Savonarola's *dogmata*, whether they contained any *novum dogma alienum* or that prophecy should be regarded as the new dogma,[256] we find an important remark: in spite of the many indications of the good fruits borne by Savonarola's sermons and the new reformed congregation, he announced that if any error would be found in his sermons or writings, he would be willing to be subjected to the Church's decision or even to the suggestion of the most common believer.[257] As implied here, as well as in what we have seen in chapter four, the possibility of an error is yet no indication of heresy. Savonarola moves on then to introduce some examples of those who suffered, were accused, and had to defend themselves because of their behaviour and for the sake of Christian truth; he thus identifies his own situation with that of Christ and other examples from Christian antiquity (*taceamus* he remarks, but I would call it a thundering silence), Dominic, Francis, Vincenzo Ferreri, and Bernardino da Feltre (1439–1494).[258] It is, in fact, quite an unusual admixture between the founders of two Mendicant Orders, i.e., major figures in the Christian tradition, and two minor and more local figures, a Dominican and a Franciscan; this was, I believe, part of the theological tension which brought up alternative heroes or models to the hegemonic scholastic tradition

[256] *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 124.

[257] *Ibid.*, p. 123: "Saepius praeterea dixit et iterum atque iterum publice confirmavit et scripsit ut [quoniam homo est] si aliquis unquam error in eius dictis scriptisve aut quovis modo exhibitis deprehensus fuerit, non tantum Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae iudicio sed vel minimi cuiusque fidelis correctioni submittere idque se palam revocaturum et emendaturum fore."

[258] *Ibid.*, pp. 125–126: "Quid demum boni ardentissime non is procuravit etiam cum summo vitae suae discrimine propter veritatem? Quae semper odiosa malis, ab eisdem carpitur, impugnatur et contunditur a quibus defendi maxime deberet. Et ut Christi ac vetustiosa taceamus exempla, recentiora succurrunt. Dum Pater ipse noster Sanctus Dominicus ab ovibus propriis controversias graves accepit, Sanctus Franciscus nullos acerbiores hostes quam suos perpessus est, Sanctus Vincentius calumniis variis affectus, Sanctus Bernardinus fratrum Minorum Observantiae restituor graviter accusatus et, ut breviter concludatur, haec omnibus veri assertoribus perpetui certaminis via unica conceditur." Both Vincenzo and Bernardino were very active and influential in their time and also involved in the reform and crisis in the Church: Vincenzo was a Spaniard who, in 1399, had to leave the curia and since then wandered through South-Western Europe, delivering an apocalyptic message; he was also active in the efforts to reunite the Church and was mentioned by Caroli (see chapter one, n. 214 and context). Bernardino was a very popular preacher who wandered, since 1471, all over Italy, and was active in the foundation of the *Monte di pietà*, institution which was part of the Franciscans' reform, destined to help the poor pay the money lenders. In 1488 he was sent away from Florence by Lorenzo de' Medici, and was allowed to return, under some restrictions, only in 1493.

and its heroes, as we have already noticed in chapter one. We can see that there is no hierarchy between Dominic and Vincenzo Ferreri, and between Francis and Bernardino da Feltre: they all, just like Savonarola, suffered on behalf of the Christian truth. It seems that the wrong people are always persecuted and that serious issues, like the status of astrology and its pretension to predict the future, are ignored.[259]

The intention to bring San Marco back under the juristiction of the vicar of the Lombard congregation Sebastiano Maggi is presented almost as an assassination attempt;[260] one wonders what could be the reason for such hate and hostility between the Lombards and the Tuscans? A partial explanation is given on a local and geographical basis, the diversity of customs, and the like.[261] I would say that the continual political tensions between Florence and Milan played some role also in this controversy, as well as personal hostility: we must not forget that Savonarola was not only a charismatic figure, but also a controversial one.

What can we learn regarding the contents of the reform? It included, no doubt, a much more consistent realization of the ideal of poverty; and apparently the Lombards were not so consistent on this issue.[262] The emphasis here is that after the reform in San Marco, the convent has become a local model of Christian life which effecs the whole city.[263]

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[259] *Ibid.*, p. 133: "Porrho, cur unus ipse infensior habetur quam plerique alii his temporibus per diversa loca tum occulte, tum publice prophetantes, aut detestabilior quam vani astrologi iudicia quotannis fallacia impune proferentes, vel quam qui damnata sortilegia et execrandos Phitones sequuntur?"

[260] *Ibid.*, p. 140: "… nisi quia iudicem non quaerunt sed iugulatorem?"

[261] *Ibid.*, pp. 143–144: "Quam enim Congregatio Lombardiae nobis infesta sit superius commemoratum est, imo quam diu paucos et concisos annos illi copulari fuimus atque ante procuratam segregationem nondum ipsorum fratrum in nos exacerbati forent animi, assiduas vexationes et perturbationes mentis et corporis pertulimus, quamquam illis subditi meritam obedientiam et reverentiam omni humilitate exhiberemus. Maxime enim et ritu et moribus a nobis discrepant. Nam unaquaeque patria proprios habet instinctus non facile remissibiles. Quemadmodum enim Lombardia transversis Alpibus ab Hetruria distinguitur, ita et moribus." See also the letters of the master general of the Order Gioacchino Torriani commanding the Lombard friars not to molest the friars of San Marco in Gherardi [ed.], *Nuovi*… pp. 52–53, 56–57.

[262] *Ibid.*, p. 145: "Quod autem severiorem servemus regulam quam fratres Lombardiae, vel hoc maxime patet argumento: quia nec praedia nec redditus ullos proprios, iuxta paupertatem ab institutore nostro praecipue commendatam, retinere volumus. Quod illi minime observant; in victu denique et vestitu parciori silentiis quoque et orationibus strictiorem et diuturniorem rigorem habemus, ut qui utramque experti sunt vitam—sicut nos—probe fatentur et res ipsa palam indicat, postquam de nobis loqui invitos causa trahit."

[263] *Ibid.*: "Nam tota haec rogetur civitas quae uno ore fatebitur longe alium vitae et

Regarding the demand that three friars (Domenico da Pescia, Tommaso Busini, and Silvestro Maruffi) should arrive within nine days in Bologna and be subjected to the authority of Sebastiano Maggi, Savonarola uses a parable of Demosthenes on the shepherds and the wolves.[264] Savonarola has no doubts regarding the fate of these friars if they appear in Bologna. Thus we can note here another use of a classical source by Savonarola but, as I have tried to show in section two, we do not have, in the case of Savonarola, a humanist theology such as we have encountered in Caroli. Savonarola can, from time to time in his sermons and other writings, cite or refer to a Greek or Roman author; but he uses it for his own purposes which included the carrying out of his vision of renovation through very pragmatic strategies and methods. As we have seen in chapter one, for Caroli the ancient Roman republic was a model for the required reform in the monastic life and in the Mendicant Orders. Virgil was for him the source of consolation in the difficult days of a deep personal crisis. Savonarola's affair gives us the best indication that it was not only a personal crisis but rather a general theological and political crisis. Savonarola's popular republicanism derived from his deep conviction that this is the best and most suitable regime for the Florentines according to their nature.

By the end of this composition we reach the problem of obedience; many Christian sources are cited here to show that there are cases when disobedience was required.[265] And here is also where we can find a more direct critique of the pope:

> But the command of the pope should be observed so long as it does not cause injustice to someone else, since the Church is the cultivator of justice.[266]

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relligionis tenorem aliudque devotionis et bonae opinionis exemplum de nobis modo exhiberi quam prius, quam diu sub fratribus Lombardiae fuimus."

[264] *Ibid.*, p. 146: "Ultimo loco positum est: *Iniungentes quoque* etc., ubi nominatim tribus fratribus ex nostris *sub excomunicationis latae sententiae poena* stricto praecepto numerus dierum novem pro tribus terminis praefixus est ad proficiscendum in Lombardiam. Sane, ut parabola utamur Demosthenis, olim cum pastoribus lupi pepigere ut traditis sibi canibus pax inter eos mutua iniretur; quibus imprudentius concessis, dilaniandi postmodum gregis facilior fuit aditus." On the sources for this phrase (Plutarch, Fulgentius Mythographus) see the detailed note *ibid.*, n. 76.

[265] *Ibid.*, pp. 150–151.

[266] *Ibid.*, p. 152: "Sed praeceptum Papae servandum est dummodo non inferat alteri iniustitiam quia Ecclesia est iustitia cultrix."

The Church as *iustitiae cultrix* is above the decisions and the commands of the pope. It seems that we have here an echo of the debate which took place during the end of the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century, more or less until the council of Florence, regarding the question of who is stronger and more authoritative, the pope or the Church's Ecumenical Council. Savonarola presents his opinion regarding this question, and in this context his words can be understood as an attack on the status of the pope. But we must notice that the term *reformatio* is not mentioned in this composition.

In Savonarola's apologetic letter to a friend of the same year, 1495, he contrasts the Evangelic truth with Satan, and argues that always and almost by definition this truth suffers from opposition and contempt; in fact, Satan has provoked the whole world against it.[267] The analogy is clear: opposition and contempt are indications of the Evangelic truth, and thus, Savonarola, who also had to face such reactions, represents this truth. The letter is thus a reaction to defamation and to different accusations against the preacher. Two things are important for our study here: first, we have another indication of the religious tension inside the religious orders, an indication of the poor state of religion represented by evil friars (and once again we find the image of the wolves), the reason for Savonarola's reform.[268] Second, we find here Savonarola's unique connection between theology and politics:

> They believe in their clemency, which is in fact no clemency but madness, that they please God, and they do not consider how eager God is to

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[267] Savonarola, *Lettere e scritti apologetici*, eds. Roberto Ridolfi, Vincenzo Romano, and Armando F. Verde (Firenze 1984), p. 239: "Dilettissimo in Cristo Iesù, io mi sono assai maravigliato che per le contradizione delli omini perversi e calunnie a me date tu sia alquanto debilitato nella via della verità, come se tu non sapessi non essere cosa nuova che la verità evangelica sempre abbi avuta grande contradizione, perchè essendo questa sola che conduce alla salute, lo avversario di Cristo, Satanas, benché sia inimico d'ogni verità, nientedimeno contra questa evangelica concita tutto el mondo, instigato dalla invidia, perché non vorrebbe che l'uomo acquistassi quella gloria della quale lui, per la sua superbia, è stato privato."

[268] *Ibid.*, pp. 240–241: "E perchè tu di' che molti religiosi buoni e dotti apertamente di eresia mi vanno calunniando, dicendo che ciò fanno per zelo della verità, io ti rispondo che se tu credessi che tutti quelli che portano l'abito religioso fussino religiosi, tu saresti in uno grande errore. Non sai tu che gli è scritto: Verranno a voi in vestimenti di pecorelle, ma dentro seranno lupi rapaci? E se tu sapessi quanta moltitudine oggi di questi si truovano, tu rimarresti in te medesimo stupefatto." This same image was used in its biblical context by Ficino in his *Apologia contra Savonarolam*… p. 78: "… ut Evangelicum illud semper ante mentis oculos et aures habeant [Matt 7, 15]: Attendite a falsis prophetis, qui veniunt ad vos in vestimentis ovium, intrinsecus autem sunt lupi rapaces, a fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos."

> punish, as can be seen in the Scriptures, especially when the sin is against the common good.[269]

What is exactly this sin against the common good of which God is so eager to punish? It is definitely not part of the common biblical sins. This is part of Savonarola's own vision in which the tyrant, who is the devil, is considered to be a divine instrument to punish a nation or a city for its sins, and his government is related to the private good and to private interests. On the other side we have the divine popular republican regime, the only solution, both on the theological and on the political level, to the absolute evil represented by the tyrannical government.[270] This apocalyptic dichotomy is an essential part in Savonarola's vision. Theology and politics are inseparable, and these two levels of the crisis demand a two level solution.

In the *Apologeticum fratrum congregationis sancti marci* written in 1497 Savonarola presents a relatively detailed discussion regarding his notion of *reformatio*.[271] Savonarola has to justify the fact that he is negating here the idea of unity (*unio*) which usually was regarded as a most positive idea and was related to harmony and perfection. In this context, Savonarola argues, unity with the Lombard congregation would cause damage (*detrimentum*), since the many young friars of San Marco could be easily corrupted by older friars of unreformed convents.[272] It seems that the new congregation was founded especially for these many new young friars who are accustomed to San Marco but would not be accustomed to other convents.[273] In fact, there is a great danger for

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[269] *Ibid.*, p. 251: "Credono con la loro clemenzia, la quale è una demenzia e non clemenzia, piacere a Dio, non considerando quanto Dio è rigido nel punire, come appare nelle Scritture Sacre, maxime quando el peccato è contra el ben comune."

[270] Again we find the same accusation of tyranny in regard to Savonarola in Ficino's *Apologia contra Savonarolam*… p. 78: "… neminem videlicet mirari debere Florentinos non inquam omnes, multi enim tyrannicam malignitatem Sevonarole suorumque quasi satellitum iamdiu deprhenderant…"

[271] Savonarola, *Lettere*… pp. 283–308; see also the first version of the text on pp, 422–429.

[272] *Ibid.*, p. 291: "Quare fieret quod et fratres praesertim iuniores ipsius Congregationis Sancti Marci deteriores efficerentur, et fratres alii Thusciae proculdubio non reformarentur, quia plurimi eorum immo fere omnes deformati, nunquam—ut inferius probabitur—reformari possunt. Fieret itaque non reformatio amplior, sed dissipatio maior."

[273] *Ibid.*, p. 292: "Nam hoc tempore tanta multitudo iuvenum est in Congregatione Sancti Marci, quod si gubernatores senioresque fuerint ab eis disseparati, et maximum in ea sequetur detrimentum, et in Thusciae conventibus—ut loco suo probabitur—nullus fructus. Cum enim ad aliorum regimen, non passim omnes sed perpauci sint

them there. Savonarola develops it into a discussion of the greater dangers awaiting the friars when they lose their spiritual way than it would be for the secular.[274] But there is yet another reason: these novices of San Marco are Savonarola's bridge to the Florentine aristocratic and powerful families.[275] This is why the separation and split from this congragation should be considered a good act.[276] The examples presented by Savonarola show a very wide gap between San Marco and the other convents; for Savonarola it was a sharp dichotomy between good and evil, and thus he even compared the other unreformed convents to the Pharisees.[277] Thus, the separation is essential for the reform. This separation is, in fact, the autonomy required for the conducting of a reform. It is not an abstract discussion about reform but rather a discussion of a sepecific reform of specific convents in a specific time, whether it is good or bad.[278] He also has to explain how come that obedience, the most important vow for friars, should, in this case, be replaced with

idonei. Si qui inter nos Dei munere existunt, adeo nobis necessarii sunt, quod eorum subtractio fieret nostrae Congregationis destructio."

[274] *Ibid.*, p. 293: "Ita in spiritualibus evenire comperias: laicos scilicet in vitia prolapsos, facile citoque converti; relligiosos autem a statu perfectionis in quo aliquando conversati sunt, abalienatos fere nunquam ad veram paenitentiam spiritualemque fervorem reverti."

[275] *Ibid.*, p. 295: "… quia multi immo fere omnes Congregationis Sancti Marci novitii tyronesque paulo ante professi, cum iuvenes, tum viri nobiles, prudentes ac boni, ex quorum indole, vita, doctrina maximum speratur augumentum relligionis et lucrum animarum, paternos lares…" See also Armando F. Verde, 'La congregazione di San Marco dell'Ordine dei Predicatori. Il 'reale' della predicazione savonaroliana', in *Memorie Domenicane* 14 (1983), pp. 151–237.

[276] *Ibid.*, pp. 287–288: "Fratres autem Thusciae conventuum si laxiores ac deformatae vitae sunt, ut ii fatentur qui eos reformare contendunt, non sunt modicum sed multum fermenti; propter quod totam Congregationem Sancti Marci corrumperent, atque ita non reformatio sed deformatio relligionis absque dubio sequeretur. Talis igitur unio neque rationis neque bona est."

[277] *Ibid.*, p. 297: "Cum igitur optimum et pessimum sint contraria, nunquam possent ii qui profecerunt cum iis qui defecerunt convenire, sed assidue invicem pugnarent, sicut quotidiana experientia semper hucusque docuit. Itaque destrueretur pax relligionis, quae finis ultimus est cuiuslibet communitatis et quae inter nos existit, Dei munere, maxima; siquidem persequitur semper Cain Abel, Ismael Isaac, Esau Iacob, et Pharisaei Christum atque Apostolos eius. Ex quibus universis sequitur quod impossibile sit inter hos veram unionem ac reformationem effici posse." And see also *ibid.*, p. 299: "… et unicum pomum infectum alia omnia inficit si non separetur. Sic Arrius, parva scintilla, totum mundum incendio pervasit."

[278] *Ibid.*, p. 288: "Virtus autem solutionis huiuscemodi quaestionis potissime consistit in cognitione non quidem universalium, sed omnium quae singulatim et bona et mala in conventibus tam reformatis quam reformandis hoc tempore fiunt…"

disobedience.[279] Savonarola claims that the circumstances and the legislator's intention are more important than the bare words of the law.[280] He seems also well aware of the historical fact that in the Dominican Order sometimes the distance between a heretic and a defender of the Catholic belief can be very small.[281] In other words, we are dealing here with the conducting of religious institutions by humam beings.

Savonarola emphasizes that conducting a reform is a human process, derived from the internal needs of the Dominican Order,[282] and thus it has nothing to do with God or miracles:

> Since regarding this matter [the conducting of a reform] it is not relevant to consider what God could do, nor to ask for miracles, but rather it is more relevant to consider what He has been in the habit of doing and what can be done by us according to what the sacred men wrote and according to the things which we have found out in this difficult age in matters of religion.[283]

There are certain people, in certain times in history, who conduct a reform.[284] A man who conducts a reform should act according to the

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[279] *Ibid.*, pp. 302–303: "Unde pariter constat fratres Congregationis Sancti Marci nullo praecepto nullaque censura ad eam ineundam posse constringi. Nec solum non obligantur, sed nec etiam debent ullo pacto talibus obedire praeceptis: hoc enim esset apostatare a Deo. Quin immo debent ipsius Congregationis superiores non tantum nullas excommunicationes formidere, sed vitam potius exponere morti quam tali unioni quae venenum, perditio et damnatio animarum filiorum suorum esset consentire. Etenim: *oportet obedire Deo magis quam hominibus*." And see also *ibid.*, p. 307: "… dicendum est quod superioribus non semper neque in omnibus obligati sumus obedire, sed in iis tantum quae secundum evangelium, regulam et constitutiones illi praecipiunt; contra vero, nulla est eorum obligatio, sicut omnes sacri Doctores communi consensu pariter affirmant."

[280] *Ibid.*: "… existimare debemus non esse intentionis aut voluntatis eorum ad illa nos astringere, quae nos implere et observare sit nefas. Nam oportet magis sequi mentem legislatoris quam verba."

[281] *Ibid.*, p. 284: "Absitque ab Ordine nostro omnis pravi dogmatis nota, qui semper heresum et errorum acerrimus expugnator extirpatorque ac catholicae fidei praecipuus defensor fuit."

[282] *Ibid.*, p. 288: "Sed relligionis Sancti Dominici forma est gratia Dei caritasque cum vinculo trium votorum et institutione vitae tendentis ad perfectionem secundum regulam et constitutiones Fratrum Praedicatorum. Relligionis ergo ipsius Sancti Dominici reformatio non tantum in exterioribus, sed magis ac principaliter essentialiterque in interioribus continetur, quia forma, a qua unaquaeque res speciem accipit, est intrinseca."

[283] *Ibid.*, p. 289: "Non est enim in hac re considerandum quid Deus facere possit, nec miracula quaerenda, sed perpendendum est quid is facere consueverit quidve fieri possit a nobis secundum ea quae sancti viri conscripserunt et quae hac tempestate in relligionibus comperimus."

[284] *Ibid.*, p. 290: "Eiusmodi quippe reformatio fieri non potest nisi per magnae auctoritatis opinionisque viros, vita et doctrina spirituali consumatos, qui imitatione,

opinions and writings of the saints, but most important, he has to be intimately familiar with the convent or congregation which needs to be reformed; he must have an immaculate reputation and an enormous authority among those members of the religious community which has to be reformed; he must act according to his own experience and according to what seems to him most righteous and reasonable, since the absolute knowledge of a reform is supernatural and thus beyond our capacity.[285] The emphasis here is on the probable and limited human knowledge which is the only knowledge that is relevant to conducting a reform. This is how Dominici and Antonino conducted their reforms.[286] By mentioning the two great Florentine reformers Savonarola relates himself to the local tradition of religious reformers. He makes use of the political tensions between Florence and other Tuscan cities[287] in order to stress the importance of locality and the smallness of the religious community which needed a reform.

While we can find here a few obvious citations of the Scriptures and of some Fathers (Augustine, Chrysostom, and Dionysius), and of Aris-

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reverentia, timore et amore digni sint apud eos quos opertet esse subiectos. Nulla siquidem reformatio nisi per tales viros—ut ex historiis late constat—aliquando facta est."

[285] *Ibid.*, pp. 288–289: "De reformatione itaque nemo bene iudicare potest, nisi formam ipsius exacte noverit; quae, cum sit supernaturalis, nemo eam potest perfecte novisse, nisi sit adeptus, iuxta illud Apocalypsis: *Nemo scit qui accipit* [Apc 2, 17]. Unde et Apostolus dicit: *Animalis homo non percipit ea quae sunt Spiritus Dei; stultitia enim est illi, et non potest intelligere, quae spiritualiter examinatur. Spiritualis autem omnia iudicat, et ipse a nemine iudicatur* [ICor 2, 14–15]. Quia igitur nos iam multos annos omnia tam intrinseca quam extrinseca, quae sunt in Congregatione Sancti Marci, manibus contrectavimus, fere etiam omnia, quae in aliis Thusciae conventibus reformandis nostra aetate in hunc usque diem gesta sunt, iamdudum sufficientissime novimus. Pro solutione quaestionis his praemissis, gratia Dei nos corroborante, dicimus audacter et probamus efficaciter hanc unionem atque reformationem, quam conficere satagunt, non solum irrationabilem esse relligionisque detrimentum ac ruinam, verum etiam impossibilem, respectu scilicet ordinis atque naturae rerum humanarum causarumque secundarum, non autem respectu primae causae."

[286] *Ibid.*, p. 298: "Sic fecit relligiosus vir beatae memoriae Iohannes Dominicus; sic observavit beatus frater Antoninus; sic coeteri maiores nostrae Congregationis; sic in primis Christus quotidie contra Pharisaeos disputans qui non pacem sed gladium venit mittere in terram, et separare triticum a palea; sic Apostoli et Prophetae, sic denique omnes sancti; sic omnes patres tum nostrae tum aliarum relligionum quicunque eas reformare curarunt, quorum innumera exempla pro brevitate omittimus. Et nos igitur illos imitari debemus."

[287] *Ibid.*, p. 299: "Nam Senenses nolunt vel nomen tantum audire Florentinorum; sic nonnulli alii, maxime vero Pisani. Oporteret itaque gratos talibus populis fratres eligere, earumque civitatum conventibus deputare."

totle, it is interesting to find one citation from John Cassian.[288] First we must note again that no Doctor of the Church is explicitly cited here. The closest Savonarola refers to the Doctors of the Church is in the discussion regarding obedience/disobedience.[289] Second, the quotation from John Cassian is very significant, since he apparently was part of the alternative theology favored by Savonarola according to Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola's biography, which represented a simpler Christian thought than that of the common patristic and scholastic theology.[290] But John Cassian must have represented for Savonarola also the one who first introduced the rules of Eastern monasticism into the West, that is, a model for an early reformer of the monastic life (although considered semipelagian).

If the conducting of a reform in some Dominican convents was indeed, according to Savonarola, a human process, the realization of a whole renovatory vision was definitely not so. The Church cannot be ruled according to the changing views, the politics, and interests of Alexander VI. The renovation must be carried out for the salvation of the Christian world, despite the powerful opposition of the Roman curia. But how? I shall deal with this issue in the next section.

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[288] *Ibid.*, p. 293. For the full account of the texts referred here see *ibid.*, pp. 419–420.

[289] *Ibid.*, p. 307: "… sicut omnes sacri Doctores communi consensu pariter affirmant."

[290] Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *Vita…* p. 13: "Alcuni vedeva in arrichire i conventi occupati, altri in mille vanità inviluppati, alcuni dati alli studii più attendere ad Aristotele che a Cristo chiaro conosceva. Il che più molesto gli era, perché a fare il medesimo era da' suoi prelati constretto, imperoché, dopo breve tempo, fu posto a leggere philosophia naturale et metaphisica, le quali scientie haveva nel secolo imparate. Fu adunque molti anni lettore et molti discepoli fece. Dipoi, poste da parte le acute et sottili questioni, tutto alla semplicità cristiana datosi, quelli libri studiava, li quali devotione gli generavano et satiavanlo delle cose di Dio, delle quali era grandemente desideroso. Et benché a questo molto utili fossino le *Collationi* di Giovanni Cassiano, le vite de' Santi Padri da San Hieronimo scritte et le meditazioni di Sant'Agostino, nondimeno la meditazione di quelli libri a nutrire l'animo suo et a sostentarlo nella vita veramente cristiana non gli bastava, né per essi si trovava mai satollo, onde spinto era a cercare miglior cibo. Per la qual cosa allo studio delle Sacre Scritture si dette, nelle quali sapeva gli huomini santi, da Cristo inluminati et ammaestrati, havere la buona vita imparata. Queste, notte et giorno studiando, tanto in esse fece profitto che quasi tutte a mente le sapeva, et questo è da Dio all'huomo concesso le intendere." John Cassian (c. 360–433) represented also a return to the founder of the Dominican order St Dominic, who was known as an admirer of this author; see William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order. Origins and Growth to 1500*, 2 vols. (New York 1965), vol. 1, pp. 18–19.

5. *Spiritual and Political Vision: The Preaching Prophet and his Slogan*

An effort to acquire authority can be found in many of Savonarola's sermons; such an authority is the condition for an influential sermon. In this section I would like to introduce the way in which Savonarola constituted his own authority *viva voce* in the sermons, under the shadow of a deep spiritual, theological, and political crisis, as an integral part of his activity and involvement in social and political issues. His purpose was, as we have already seen, to reinforce the spiritual and political reform he conducted in Florence. As I shall show here, the question of authority is inseparable from Savonarola's vision.

In a letter to his mother dated January 25, 1490, he explained the relation between authority, preaching, and the necessity for the friar-preacher-prophet to leave his own fatherland, by using the biblical theme 'there is no prophet in his own fatherland':

> If I had stayed in Ferrara continuously, believe me that I would not have produced so many fruits as I have while acting outside Ferrara, since there is no friar, or just very few, who produce fruits through their sacred life while staying in their own fatherland; this is why the Scriptures always commands us loud and clear to depart from our fatherland, if only because people do not believe in someone of their own fatherland as they believe in a stranger's sermons and moral counsels. And our Saviour says that a prophet is not recognized in his own fatherland: and even He was not recognized in his own fatherland.[291]

As I have tried to show in section three, the preacher represents a combination of the contemplative and the active. In his unique status the preacher has both to be in touch with contemplative life and to be a model for the Christian perfect life, and with his active duty to bear many good fruits among his listeners. This status enabled Savonarola to criticize the government, the society, and the state of religion in Florence of the 1490s. His critical position, which represented his involvement in active life, was in fact the consequence of contem-

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[291] Savonarola, *Lettere*… pp. 17–18: "Se io stesse a Ferrara continuamente, crediate che non faria tanto frutto quando faccio di fori, sì perchè gniuno religioso, o pochissimi, fanno mai frutto di santa vita nella partia propria, e però la santa Scrittura sempre grida che si vada fori de la patria, sì etiam perchè non è data tanta fede a uno della patria, quanto a uno forestiero, e ne le predicazioni e consigli; e però dice el nostro Salvatore che non è profeta accetto ne la patria sua: onde ancora lui non fu accetto ne la sua patria."

plative life and divine inspiration; the preacher is a mediator between God and the believers. But how can such a mediator aquire authority under the shadow of a crisis? Savonarola cannot be satisfied merely with the authority of a preacher, since he also has to deal with the crisis in religious authority. This is represented in the sermons by both his repeated requests from the audience to believe him[292] and the repeated demand for proofs through miracles.[293] There are also other preachers in the city, why should the believers listen to him? In order to constitute an efficient authority Savonarola has to be more than just another preacher. First, he discusses the duties of the preacher:

> You have to notice that the preacher has to do three things: first, he has to illuminate the people; second, to delight [them]; third, to incline [them], i.e., to pull the people towards good life.[294]

But the preacher has a greater responsibility; his duties seem partly similar to the duties of the angels.[295] This similarity is not a coincidence; it is part of Savonarola's effort to place the preacher in a higher position. Again and again he argues in front of his audience that his words are from God and that he was inspired by God.[296] He posits himself beside biblical figures that were very close to God like Moses;[297] in other places he compares his situation to that of Christ while he struggled against

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[292] Savonarola, *Prediche*… vol. 3b, p. 564.

[293] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 438: "Abel non fece miraculi che fu el primo iusto, nè Noè quando predisse el diluvio. Jona a' Niniviti non fece miraculi; va, discurrendo per le Scritture, troverrai molti profeti che non feciono mai miracoli *et tamen* voleva Dio che fussi loro creduto. Vedi Moisè che fece tanti miracoli *et tamen* Faraone non credette. Li Apostoli feciono tanti miraculi e non di meno non era lor creduto, quando ti fussino dati e miracoli, ancora non crederesti, perchè e miracoli non fanno credere, ma bisogna simplicità di vita. Se avessi fede di Cristo, crederresti ancora queste cose, perchè la fede inclina alla verità e questa è la verità."

[294] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 25: "Dove dovete notare che 'l predicatore ha a fare tre cose: la prima è che 'l debba illuminare el populo; la seconda, delettare; la terzia, inclinare, cioè tirare li uomini alla buona vita." We can compare these duties of the preacher with the three Ciceronian duties of the orator: *delectare*, *flectere*, and *probare* in Cicero, *Orator* 69.

[295] *Ibid.*, p. 88: "Tre sono le operazioni che si domandano ierarchiche, le quali fanno le ierarchie delli angeli: la prima è purgare, la seconda illuminare, la terzia perficere."

[296] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 4: "… udite le mie parole, non come da me, ma come da Dio venute"; p. 47: "Io ti vorrei dire quello che Dio m'ha inspirato"; I am just a weak instrument of God, he argues in *ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 142; *Prediche sopra Ezechiele*… vol. 1, p. 15.

[297] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 220: "Io fo come fece Moisè, che dette prima al populo e precetti morali, poi e iudiciali e cerimoniali."

the Scribes and the Pharisees;[298] he even compares the authority of his sermons to the authority of the Scriptures.[299]

But it seems that all this rhetoric was not enough and Savonarola had to face again and again his opponents, on the one hand, and his unstable authority, on the other. His continual confrontation with the demand that he should prove his words by miracles brought him closer to the solution of the problem of authority: exchanging miracles with prophecies; and thus:

> And also many prophecies and many things which proceed from God were not been accompanied by miracles in such an obvious way, nonetheless [these things] caused miracles that were not minor to that of illuminating the eyes of the blind.[300]

It seems that in a perspective of time the sermons, which include warnings, promises, instructions, rebukes and encouragement, have a special quality:

> There are some who blame me for preaching things in order to cheat and deceive; what a stupid thing to say, since it is now five years that I have been saying the same things in a simple way; now that the things which I have predicted have come about they are ashamed and blame me for cheating and deceiving. Others say that one should not believe that someone is a prophet unless he has first performed miracles, because of the chapter: *Ex iniuncto extra de hereticis*. You have not understood what you have read; go and read all the Twelve Minor Prophets; you shall hardly find out that they performed miracles; but leave the others and take St John the Baptist as your advocate. Hear what the Scriptures say about him: *Johannes quidem signum non fecit*, i.e., John did not make miracles and still he was a prophet and more than a prophet. Read carefully this text and you shall see that it describes those who were not sent by their superiors. Do you not know that I have been sent by the supreme pontiff this time? And if I was sent in an invisible way, I do not have to tell you about it. God knows.[301]

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[298] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, pp. 83, 230.

[299] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 47.

[300] *Ibid.*, p. 347: "E benchè molte profezie e molte cose che procedono da Dio non siano accompagnate dalli miracoli così espressi, *tamen* fanno miracoli non minori che illuminare ciechi…"

[301] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 169–170: "Alcuni dicono che queste cose io le dico per ingegno e per astuzia; vedi che cosa sciocca che prima già cinque anni sono dicevono che le dicevo per simplicità; ora che le sono venute loro si vergognono e dicono che io le dico per astuzia e per ingegno. Alcuni altri dicono che non si debba credere a uno che si fa profeta, se non fa prima miracoli per il capitulo: Ex iniuncto extra de hereticis. Tu non hai ben letto; va, leggi, tutti li dodici profeti; pochi troverai che facessino miracoli; ma lascia li altri e guarda San Giovanni Battista advocato tuo; odi quello che dice la

It is not a coincidence that Savonarola dedicated so many sermons to Amos, Zecharia, Micha, and Haggai; it is directly related to his efforts to constitute his new authority. The special quality of the sermons is that they are truthful and verified prophecies:

> My sons, I told you the truth, and I have not predicted these things in a general way, but rather I told you [that these predicted things] came [to me] in a very special way from heaven. You did not want to believe. You shall see by effect and through experience that every single thing which I have predicted is going to happen.[302]

Savonarla argues that he predicted many years in advance not only all the events that occurred in Italy and in Florence but also the death of some known figures.[303]

What, then, was this new authority which Savonarola has constituted for himself? It was the authority of a preaching prophet. He deliberately and gradually obscured in the sermons the distinction between the preacher and the prophet, between preaching and prophesying, and between the verb *predicare* and the verb *profetare*.[304] Regarding the arguments against the legitimacy of prophesying, Savonarola says that

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scrittura di lui [John 10, 41, with variations]: Johannes quidem signum non fecit, idest Giovanni non fece miracolo e tamen fu profeta e più che profeta. Guarda quel testo adunque bene e vedrai che parla di quelli che non sono mandati dalli suoi superiori. Non sai tu che io ti sono mandato da parte del sommo pontefice questa volta? E se io sono mandato poi invisibilmente, io non te l'ho a dire. Iddio lo sa."

[302] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 562: "Figliuoli miei, io v'ho detto il vero, e non v' ho predetto queste cose, che io le abbia avute per modo universale, ma vi dico per modo speziale venuto dal cielo. Voi non volete credere. Voi lo vedrete per effetto e per esperienzia, che non ne fallirà uno iota di quello che io v' ho detto."

[303] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 51–52: "Io predissi parecchi anni innanzi la morte di Lorenzo di Medici, la morte di Innocenzio papa; *item* il caso che è stato adesso qui a Firenze della mutazione di stato. *Item* dissi che quello di che sarebbe il Re di Francia a Pisa che qui saria la renovazione di questo stato, io non ho detto queste cose quassù publice, ma l'ho detto a quelli che sono qui a questa predica ed ho li testimoni qui a Firenze."

[304] Savonarola cannot, of course, be regarded as an innovator in this. In the Florentine context, from the last third of the fourteenth century onwards, there was a tradition of preachers with prophetic features who expressed religious, social, and political tensions. See Wienstein, *Savonarola*… pp. 43–46; Trexler, *Public*… p. 349; Polizzotto, *The Elect*… pp. 202–203. These tensions were formulated in the combinations 'the sacred nation' or 'the nation of God', which were used during the days of the *Ciompi* revolt in 1378, and were part of a mediaeval tradition which emphasized the unique status of Florence and the Florentines as the elect nation of God; see Schnitzer, *Savonarola* … vol. 1, p. 256. For the ancient Christian tradition see Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *From Prophecy To Preaching—A Search for the Origins of the Christian Homily* (Leiden 2001); for the mediaeval Christian tradition see A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship* (Worcester 1988).

neither Canon Law nor Civil Law prohibit prophesying. The only prohibition is that someone who is preaching without the permission of the Church must prove that he was sent by God, either through miracles or through the Scriptures.[305] Apparently the laws distinguish between preaching and prophesying and prohibit preaching without the permission of the Church, or require special criteria for such preaching. Why did Savonarola mix together the discussion of prophesy and the discussion of preaching? Because he wanted to obscure this distinction. For him it is one and the same thing. This is the culmination of the tension, already emphasized and discussed in the previous chapters, between the human and the divine. Ficino's request for moments of revelation is being realized here by Savonarola, who replaced miracles with prophecies. Thus, in his interpretation of the parable of the lord and the vineyard in Matthew 21, 33–40, Savonarola posits the preachers and prophets in the same place.[306] The equal status of the preacher and the prophet enabled Savonarola to determine his own status. When he deals with the response of Amos to the priest Amaziah in Amos 7, 14, he says:

> Indeed, *I am no prophet and no son of a prophet*; now I tell you just as Amos said: I am no prophet nor son of a prophet: you can understand it as you like.[307]

The meaning of these words is that Savonarola, just like Amos—whose status as a true prophet is beyond doubt—is a true prophet with the full authority of a messenger and a representative of God. Thus, his difficulties and sufferings are also part of his divine election[308] and they

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[305] Savonarola, *Prediche*… vol. 3b, p. 38: "Non lo proibisce ancora el profetare la legge canonica nè la civile; bene è proibito el predicare a chi non è mandato, ma non dice la legge el profetare, ma che chi volesse predicare senza licenzia della Chiesa, bisogneria che provasse essere mandato da Dio o per miraculo o per Scrittura; non lo proibisce adunque nessuna legge."

[306] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 355: "… li servi che erono andati a' lavoratori per el frutto, erano li predicatori e li profeti, li quali Idio aveva mandati a quel popolo perchè rendessino el frutto nel tempo suo." Another example is in vol. 3b, p. 516: "Idio attende per la sua bontà a far buoni li uomini; così li angeli atendono a confortar li uomini al bene; così li profeti e li predicatori buoni atendono a questo medesimo."

[307] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 502: "Orsù, *ego non sum propheta neque filius prophetae*; io ti dico ancora io come diceva Amos: io non son profeta nè figliuolo di profeta: intendila come ti piace."

[308] *Ibid.*, p. 29: "Avendo dunque fatto così a tutti li tuoi eletti, io misono confortato nella mia tribulazione…"

could end with the death of the preacher/prophet.[309] This death is part of the duty of the good shepherd,[310] and Savonarola uses it as another weapon in his struggle for authority.

There are yet two alternative authorities against which Savonarola reacts in the sermons: that of the philosopher and that of the astrologer.

Savonarola's main argument against the philosopher was that he is bound only to the natural light with which only natural things can be perceived; supernatural things are completely beyond this light. The human intellect uses this natural light and the philosopher bases his concepts and notions solely on this light. The superior area of faith can be pecieved only through the supernatural light which is neglected by the philosopher. Because of this reason God—the first truth from which all the other truths are derived—is beyond the power of the philosopher:

> The philosophers search only with natural light the things which they are to study; as for the true Christian, it is appropriate to search through being inspired by supernatural light, and with the grace of God. There are some other books which are good and useful since they contain moral precepts. I do not disapprove of the knowledge and doctrine in these books.[311]

Which books and authors does he approve of? Seneca, Aristotle, and Philo.[312] Savonarola wishes, in this context, to contrast philosophical knowledge with Christian knowledge, and he cites the two great Christian theologians, Augustine and Thomas, both known for their frequent use of philosophical arguments, and argues that philosophical knowledge is not necessary in matters of faith.[313] The philosophers cannot understand what the divine good is; they cannot grasp such endless goodness which led to the crucifixion.[314] This goodness is related to the

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[309] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 141: "Procura adunque quanto tu vuoi e non credere che io mi ridica; anzi ti dico che io sono parato a metterci infino alla vita."

[310] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 321.

[311] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 50: "E filosofi cercorno solo col lume naturale le cose che loro andorono meditando; al vero cristiano appartiene cercare di empiersi del lume sopranaturale, e della grazia di Dio. Sono alcuni altri libri che sono buoni in sè e sono utili perchè sono morali. Io non reprobo la scienzia e dottrina che è in quelli."

[312] *Ibid.*

[313] *Ibid.*, p. 51: "Dice San Tommaso nella Prima Parte [*Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 8] che tutte le ragioni de' filosofi hanno poca forza nella fede, e santo Agostino dice che la Chiesa nel suo principio si difese senza questa scienzia; se tu vuoi esser cristiano, da' opera alla scienzia cristiana e non alla seculare, chè farai più frutto all'anima tua, datti tutto a Cristo…"

[314] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 189: "Li filosofi non credettono la bontà di Dio quando disputarono

divine love and to the relation between God and men; it has a practical aspect, represented by the preacher, which the philosophers cannot see. Let them mock, Savonarola proclaims:

> And despite the fact that some of those who are considered sages in this world are mocking and [regarding me] as a disgrace for them, anyone who would seriously consider the matter would understand that they are not wise, but rather unwise, since if they do not understand the purpose of human life, certainly they are unwise, and if they understand it but do not look for it they are even more unwise, and if they do look for it but outside the Christian religion, the best religion one could ever find, can we conclude otherwise than that they are unwise and insane?[315]

Who are these sages? In his attack Savonarola distinguishes the theologians—who begin from God and use the Scriptures in order not to err—from the philosophers—who begin from their inferior knowledge and base their conclusions on their senses and thus, very often, fall into errors.[316] The philosophers are the object of the attack:

> The philosophers cannot deny God's power, as reason persuades them, saying that God is a pure actuality. They also cannot deny [God's] wisdom, since they see the miraculous order in the universe, nor can they deny the goodness of God, since they see that God conducts everything towards its purpose.[317]

The object of the attack here are not the contemporary Neoplatonic humanists and their ancient theology, and no sophisticated skeptical arguments are introduced. What we seem to have here is a very traditional critique of the scholastic Aristotelian philosophers and their method. The preacher warns against selfish love and arrogance—characteristics of the philosophers—and adds that those who follow them

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con Moises e dissono: *Digitus Dei est hic*. Provorono e la potenzia di Dio e la sapienzia, ma la bontà di Dio non credettono et hoc est quod defecerunt in tertio signo, cioè che non credettono che fussi di tanta bontà Iddio, che volessi morire per li peccatori."

[315] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, pp. 26–27: "E benchè alcuni che sono reputati sapienti in questo mondo si faccino beffe di me e che io sia in obbrobrio a loro, nientedimeno chi considera bene, intenderà che non sono sapienti, ma insipienti, perchè se e' non conoscono el fine dell'umana vita, certo sono insipienti, e se lo conoscono e nol cercano, sono ancora più insipienti, e se lo cercano, ma fuor della religione cristiana, della quale niuna si può trovare migliore, che si puo dire altro, se non che sono insipienti e pazzi?"

[316] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[317] *Ibid.*, p. 427: "… li filosofi non possono negare la potenzia di Dio, chè la ragione li convince e dicono *quod Deus est actus purus*. Non possono ancora negare la sapienzia, per rispetto che veggono il mirabile ordine dello universo; non possono ancora negare la bontà di Dio, perchè veggano che ogni cosa Idio conduce al suo fine."

become as hard as stones.[318] The philosophers can praise God only through their natural light, and within the bounds of their self-respect, and only with words. In fact, the sages and philosophers do not know how to praise God, and they should learn from the children who are doing it simply and through acts.[319] This critique now seems less traditional: the emphasis is on the fact that the philosophers or the men of the schools do not have a practical basis and because of that their philosophy is worthless. The philosophers are regarded as inferior and bound only by an inferior truth which has no practical meaning. Savonarola changes the accepted distinction between inferior practical truth (*prudentia* or φρόνησις), which involves, e.g., estimating changeable opinions in human affairs, and superior speculative truth which involves unchangeable knowledge (*scientia* or ἐπιστήμη): the superior unchangeable truth is also a practical one. Such a modification brings Savonarola closer to the humanists, who emphsized the importance of prudence in their theory of rhetoric and in politics, under the influence of Aristotle and Cicero.[320] But Savonarola does not need Aristotle or Cicero, since he does not deal with theory or speculations but rather with actions and with the realization of his renovationary vision. His critique of the Aristotelian philosophers is based on a simpler notion of Christianity, on a traditional critique against the use of too much philosophy in theological discussions, and on the basic distinction between natural and supernatural power.[321] The authority of the philosophers should thus be neglected. But there is yet another threatening authority, closer to the preaching prophet: the astrologers.

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[318] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 198: "Questo vuol dire che insino a qui non v' è stato predicato la Scrittura semplicemente, ma v' è stato dato pietre, cioè la durezza de'filosofi che furono tutti duri e non potetton mai spicarsi dallo amor proprio e dalla superbia. Guarda tutti color che oggi seguiton la dottrina di quelli filosofi: gli troverai tutti duri come pietre."

[319] *Ibid.*, pp. 367–368: "Sono alcuni, o Signore, che hanno biasimato el nome tuo, perchè si reputano di tanto grande ingegno che non rendevono laude al nome tuo di cosa alcuna. Ma li fanciulli che portano la tua croce, t'hanno laudato e sempre ti laudano. Li filosofi ti laudorno per lume proprio naturale, costoro ti laudano per lume sopranaturale; li filosofi per onor proprio, costoro con simplicità per tuo onore; li filosofi con la lingua, costoro ti laudano con le opere. Li filosofi ti laudorno in poco luogo nelle loro scuole; questi fanciulli per tutte le strade cantano: *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini: Hosanna in excelsis*. Questi sono quelli che veramente laudano el nome tuo."

[320] O'Malley, *Praise and Blame*… especially pp. 36–76; Kahn, *Rhetoric*… especially pp. 29–88.

[321] I must thus reject De Pace's description in *La scepsi*… p. 12: "… le opere di Sesto Empirico, il cui studio Savonarola, poco prima di morire, aveva promosso nella cerchia di San Marco, furono per lui lo strumento più efficace per avvilire l'arroganza dei filosofi e ristabilire la fede quale fonte unica di certezza e verità."

Savonarola argues that the astrologer is bound only by the natural world and therefore he has very limited power. In addition, astrology is contrasted, on the one hand, with free will, and on the other with divine power. Only God knows everything in advance; thus, the pretension of the astrologer represents an offense towards the authority of God and cannot be truthful. Prophecy, which originated from God, and astrology, are thus incomparable:

> And so God wanted to announce in his things [Scriptures?] that anyone who falls from this order is a sinner, and because of this he is going to be punished. And He made His prophets predict about 2,000 years in advance: "This and that is going to happen", and the prophets wrote the things God revealed, and afterwards it was obvious that every single thing predicted in their written prophecies occurred. And then it was said: these things were directed by the divine intellect and wisdom. Go and say: this cannot be achieved through astrology, since beyond other reasons that I have introduced to you, the astrologers need to see the nativity of the man in order to prepare their judgment. But the prophets predicted things which were not even born. They had predicted the nativity of Christ 1,100 years in advance, and thus, the words of the prophecy cannot be [the product] of astrology.[322]

There is an essential difference between the prophet and the astrologer: the astrologer cannot do anything beyond his natural powers. This is common to both astrologers and philosophers, and both disciplines are excluded from the area of unchangeable knowledge (*totalmente esclusa dal nome delle scienzie*).[323] Astrologers are compared to Pharaoh's magi-

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[322] Savonarola, *Prediche*… vol. 3b, p. 217: "Così Dio nelle cose sue ha voluto fare una stampa che chi cade da quello ordine va in peccato, e però che e' sia di poi punito. E ha fatto predire alli suoi profeti alle volte dumila anni innanzi:—e' sarà così e così—, e li profeti l' hanno scritto che Idio ha detto così, e di poi s' è veduto che non è fallato uno iota di quello che hanno scritto. Onde poi si dice:—questa cosa è stata regulata dallo intelletto e dalla sapienzia divina—e vai discorrendo e di':—questo non può esser per astrologia;—perchè fra l'altre ragioni che io t'ho dette, li astrologi vogliono vedere la natività de l'uomo a volere far iudizio; ma li profeti hanno detto di quelli che avevano ancora a nascere. Predissono la natività di Cristo centinaia e migliaia d'anni innanzi, sì che le parole della profezia non possono esser d'astrologia."

[323] Savonarola, *Trattato contra li astrologi* in *Scritti filosofici*… vol. 1, pp. 275–370; see p. 303: "Ma non solamente l'astrologia divinatoria si dimonstra essere nulla perchè li eccellentissimi filosofi ovvero non si sono degnati di nominarla ovvero se ne sono fatti beffe, ma *etiam* perchè, per li fondamenti e per le ragioni della loro filosofia, è totalmente esclusa dal nome delle scienzie. E prima questo appare perchè ogni nostra cognizione comincia dal senso, per el quale sono portate le cose sensibile alla fantasia e dalla fantasia allo intelletto, e perchè el senso esteriore non conosce se non le cose quando le sono presenti, non possiamo per li sensi esteriori conoscere le cose future per modo alcuno."

cians—a comparison with a critical tone; nothing which the astrologers do is worthy of admiration or can be comparable to the resurrection of a dead man, which is obviously beyond natural powers.[324] It seems that there is a strong astrological influence around, and Savonarola refers to a book written by an ecclesiastic who argued that the Christian religion was founded on astrology;[325] he prefers the opinion of Isaiah.[326] The sky—the area of the astrologers—despite the fact that it is made of a special matter, is not separated from the rest of the material bodies which are regarded as secondary causes and thus directed by God:

> And in like manner, despite the fact that the sky governs the corporeal things, it is not above free will, because it is corporeal, and our free will is a spiritual thing. But a body does not affect the spirit. So the sky cannot influence directly free will, but it only influences the sensitive parts.[327]

Astrology cannot compete with the free will of man, and thus the preacher can conclude that it cannot predict future contingent things; only God can do it and can reveal it to whoever he wants.[328]

It is not a coincidence that the discussion of the falsity of astrology is close, in many sermons, to a discussion of the status of the prophet; the apparent similarity between the astrologer and the prophet obliged Savonarola to introduce a criterion of the prophet:

> The prophets have this light from God, but David said in the psalm: *their sound became known everywhere*, and he was referring to the Apostles, who

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[324] Savonarola, *Prediche*… vol. 3b, p. 125: "Verbigrazia, lo astrologo intende lo eclisse del sole, e benchè quella sia cosa ammiranda e la causa non la intenda ognuno, *tamen* perchè è nota alli astrologi che n' hanno scienzia, *non est causa admiranda simpliciter*; ma quando suscitassi un morto, saria *simpliciter admiranda*, perchè niuna causa naturale lo può fare, ma solo Idio che è massimamente ascosto. Sono dunque alcune cose che non sono sopra ogni natura, come fu quello che feciono e' magi di Faraone, cioè le rane, e feciono la verga diventar serpente."

[325] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 392.

[326] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 167: "Dice Isaia: non credete a segni del cielo [Ier 10, 2]. Questa scrittura di Isaia fu fatta dallo Spirito Santo. E se tu credessi alla astrologia, diresti che lo Spirito Santo non l'avessi inteso e non sapessi quello che può fare il cielo, ma tu diresti il falso perchè lo Spirito Santo non può errare, ergo non si debbe credere alla astrologia."

[327] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 310: "E *similiter*, benchè il cielo governi le cose corporali, non ha però forza sopra el libero arbitrio, perchè e' cieli sono corpi, e il libero arbitrio nostro è cosa spirituale. *Sed corpus non agit in spiritum*; adunque e' cieli non possono influire nel libero arbitrio direttamente, ma bene ha influenzia sopra la parte sensitiva."

[328] *Ibid.*, p. 312: "Concludendo adunque, diciamo che il cielo non opera nel libero arbitrio dello uomo e che le cose contingenti future non si possono sapere per virtù del cielo, come dicono li astrologi, ma solo Idio è quello che le sa e rivelale a chi li piace."

> lived many years after David, and still through this light he could see their deeds as if they were already being done.[329]

This same light helped Daniel against King Nebuchadnezzar.[330] This light is also the instrument of Savonarola:

> And now: what do you mean, friar? These things which you have predicted four years ago, where did you find them? There is no need for me to tell you this, since this issue was not meant to be understood.[331]

Savonarola leaves no room for doubt: he was predicting with the inspiration of the divine light. The negation of the astrologer's authority is part of constituting the identity and authority of the preaching prophet. In other cases he can critically refer to the philosopher, the astrologer, and to the poet, and nagate the authority of all of them.[332] The preaching prophet is thus the only representative of divine authority. His authority abolishes the authority of the philosopher and the astrologer. But what is the purpose of the preaching prophet? For what purpose does he use his authority?

> I have predicted the reform that you had to make and there are some who even now do not see and do not understand this properly.
>
> And thus I have predicted to you and said that you had to rebuild and reform your city and your regime.[333]

Savonarola is trying to conduct and ensure a religious-spiritual, social, and political reform in Florence. The stormy events had shaken every authoritative instititon, and so, this critical situation demanded the

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[329] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 35–36: "Li profeti avevono ancora di questo lume di Dio e però disse David nel salmo: *In omnem terram exivit sonus eorum* [Ps 19, 5], intendendo degli Apostoli i quali furno moltissimi anni dopo David, *et tamen* Lui con quello lume vedeva già l'opera loro come cosa fatta."

[330] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[331] *Ibid.*: "Orsù: che vuoi tu dire, frate, per questo? Le cose che tu hai predette da quattro anni in qua, donde le hai tu avute? E' non bisogna che io te lo dica questo, perchè la materia non è disposta ad intenderlo."

[332] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 346: "E' secondi sono certi dotti cattivi, massime filosofi, astrologi, poeti, e' quali parlano mille cose sciocche e non vorrebbono che si facessi bene e hanno in odio chi lo fa." See also Savonarola's distinction between pagan poets and biblical prophets in his *Apologeticus de ratione poeticae artis…* p. 253: "Inter versus enim poetarum gentilium et prophetarum nostrorum infinita distantia est: in illis enim magnus diaboli laquetus absconditus est."

[333] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 262: "Io t'ho predicato la riforma che tu debbi fare ed alcuni pur ancora non veggano e non intendano questo bene"; "Così io predico a voi e dico che voi dobbiate riedificare e riformare la vostra città ed el vostro reggimento."

reaction of the preaching prophet, in order to give the new popular regime and the reform a chance:

> And in the present it is another Florence, different from what it was before. The day you made this change, your previous form was excluded and a new one was introduced. And in the same way as God created everything from nothing, we can say that God, without any damage, changed everything with one stroke; and it was like a miraculous thing that a state which was founded and strengthened for sixty years would be extinguished in one moment by itself without any damage. And thus, Florence, the heaven and earth were created in you again, as our text says.[334]

Now it is a different Florence, announced Savonarola. The city was almost reborn with this reform. This was the reaction of the preaching prophet to the political reform in the city. But there were many dangers and many powerful foes who were against all this reform. The preaching prophet had to introduce the reform to the Florentines and persuade them that this was what Florence needed. He had to create a new authority for the new popular regime. But how? It was not an easy task, since crisis was all around and since the old Medici regime had established its own political patterns and practices over a period of sixty years. The whole political life of the city was directed according to these patterns and practices. It was impossible for the new regime to succeed without some preparation, without creating a real opportunity, without which it had no chance. But let us first explain briefly what exactly this new popular regime was.

In the Florentine context it meant the participation of more citizens in political life; but, of course, political rights were not separated from economic status. Thus, in the popular regime, the participants in politics, who were allowed to elect and be elected to the political posts and to the different councils, were only the members of the guilds. This left outside political life two social groups: the Magnates, who were the old feudal families, and the hired workers, the *sottoposti*. While the first group could have, due to its economic power and social relations, some

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[334] *Ibid.*, p. 269: "E questa al presente è un'altra Firenze, che non era quella. Nel giorno che tu facesti mutazione, fu esclusa la forma prima ed introdotta un'altra. E sì come Dio di nulla fece ogni cosa, così possiamo dire che Dio sanza lesione alcuna, mutò in un tratto ogni cosa; e fu quasi cosa maravigliosa che uno stato fondato e firmato in sessanta anni, si spegnesse da sè stesso in uno istanti sanza lesione alcuna. È adunque, Firenze, creato in te nuovamente el cielo e la terra, come dice qui el testo [Is 65, 17]."

political effect, the second group was totally excluded from politics. The Florentine republic was thus exposed to social tensions, especially at times of pestilence and hunger, which were treated by the government by increasing the support of the poor through the private charity organizations. The central institution in the popular regime was the Great Council; its members were only Florentine citizens, over 29 years old, who paid all their taxes and one member of whose family had held a political post. By the end of the fifteenth century there were around 3,600 citizens who could be members of the Great Council. Since all of them could not be assembled at the same time, they were divided into three groups, 1,200 citizens each, and every group functioned as the Great Council for six months. In the Great Council, in which the decisions regarding legislation initiatives and the appointment of the different magistrates were taken by voting, there were no discussions or orations. From the Great Council the Council of the eighty was elected. This Council assembled once a week and its duty was to advise the *Singoria* and the other magistrates. The Council of the commune, the Council of the people, and the Council of the seventy were all abolished. All the rest of the political institutions and magistrates functioned just as they did in the old Medici regime. The great number of members of the Great Council required the building of a new hall; this need was mentioned in Savonarola's sermons and discussed, in its institutional and historical context, by Schnitzer and Rubinstein.[335]

Savonarola is aware of the complicated and delicate situation and takes responsibility:

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[335] Schnitzer, *Savonarola*… vol. 1, pp. 232–235; Rubinstein, 'I primi anni…' On pp. 160–165 Rubinstein gives a smaller number of members in the Great Council: around 2,250, divided into three groups of 500–750 citizens. Rubinstein emphasizes (e.g., on pp. 159 and 178–179) the constitutional changes which affected also the number of members (see, for instance, the figures on pp. 178–188) of the Great Council between 1494–1499 and the efforts to increase this number. These changes reflected different constitutional and political tensions and problems with which the new republican regime had to deal. Rubinstein's study of the Great Council is still the most detailed modern historical account of this institution and its evolution. On the need for a new hall see pp. 174–180. See also Rubinstein's general observations on p. 324: "Nell'insieme la riforma del 23 dicembre costituisce una vittoria del principio elettivo sopra quello della tratta, che era stato sostenuto durante il periodo precedente come alternativa costituzionale all'intervento arbitrario dei Medici. Se il 2 dicembre potè sembrare naturale che la caduta dei Medici dovesse essere seguita dal ripristino del sistema elettorale tradizionale, la legge del 23 dicembre riflette un atteggiamento fondamentalmente diverso. Tale cambiamento, determinato dalla decisione di creare il Consiglio Maggiore, era corroborato dall'esempio della costituzione veneziana."

> Therefore, since we wanted, through our preaching, to introduce a new custom and demonstrate the renovation which should be done against the contrary custom, we have to do it slowly and step by step.[336]

The sermons were meant to introduce the new customs; a part of this complex process was the negation of the old contrary customs. But how exactly was it possible to create a real opportunity for the new regime? As we have already seen, the crisis Florence was facing had shaken any authority, and thus, all authoritative voices and arguments became equal. Savonarola realized that he had to act in a new way. He starts by positing Christ as the king of Florence:

> Thus make sure that you stay united under your king, Jesus Christ; soon He will arrive in Florence and He will say: *I have been made king*.[337]

What is the meaning of this statement, which soon became Savonarola's slogan, that Christ is the ruling king of Florence? This was, I argue, the opportunity given to the new popular regime by the preaching prophet. By positing Christ as the king of Florence, political practice was transferred to a contemplative-spiritual area and thus it made three things possible:

1. The negation of the authority of the tyrant and the tyrannical regime which formed the basis of the previous political life in the city. In fact, this statement separated political practice from political and active life.
2. The preaching prophet has to reunite political practice and political life through his authority and status in the city.
3. This statement made possible the negation of all the values which were the foundation of the previous active life. Then, it would be possible to reload them with new contents which would form the basis for the new political practice.

Such a course was represented, for example, in a sermon delivered on December 27, 1494:

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[336] Savonarola, *Prediche…* vol. 1, p. 125: "Pertanto volendo noi col nostro predicare introdurre nuova consuetudine e demostrare la rennovazione che si debba fare per contraria consuetudine, ci bisogna andare pian, piano, ed a poco a poco."

[337] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 234: "Attendete adunque a stare uniti sotto el vostro Re, Iesu Cristo, el quale verrà ancora nella città di Firenze e dirà: *Ecce, ego sum Rex constitutus* [Ps 2, 6]…"

> Christ is the lord and king of everything, just as He Himself says: *all the power was given to me in heaven and earth*. I commend you, Florence, to Him; make sure that no one else will be your leader.[338]

The power and government in heaven and earth was given to Christ, i.e., the term king was being related to a spiritual entity; Florence, of course, was also under this power. Immediately afterwards Savonarola critically discusses the government of a single ruler:

> It is not possible to deny that these governments of a single ruler are not the best, unless the ruler is a perfect man. If you consider man as a body, all the members are ruled by the heart, which is the most perfect member. If you consider man as a soul, all its parts are ruled by reason, which is the most perfect part.[339]

The government of a single ruler can be perfect only if the ruler would be a perfect man. But when we discuss the government on a state it depends also on the nature of the place:

> Indeed, Florence, what do you want, which ruler, which king is it possible to offer you, to make you peaceful? I have already said that the government of a single ruler is not the best for every place or for every state, and Saint Thomas said that in Italy rulers tend to turn into tyrants, because of those who overflow with passion and talent, and it is not the same in the states beyond the mountains.[340]

Savonarola exploits the yearning for stability represented by the notion of a king, and the sense that this new popular regime is not legitimate, in order to constitute the authority of the new regime. What is, then, the relation between the government of Christ in Florence and the government of a tyrant?

> Indeed, Florence, God wanted to satisfy you and to give you one ruler and one king who would govern you. And this is Christ: this is our psalm

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[338] *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 361: "Cristo è Signore e re del tutto come Lui anche el dice: *Omnis potestas est data mihi in coelo et terra* [Mt 28, 18]. Raccomandati a Lui, Firenze; veggo che tu vorresti che qualcuno fusse tuo capo."

[339] *Ibid.*, p. 362: "Non si può negare che quelli governi che si reducano ad uno capo solo, non siano ei migliori, ma bisogna che quel capo sia perfetto. Se tu consideri l'uomo quanto al corpo, tutte le sue parti si reducano al cuore, come al membro più perfetto. Se tu lo consideri quanto all'anima, tutte le sue parti si reducano alla ragione, come a più perfetta parte."

[340] *Ibid.*: "Orsù, Firenze, che vorresti tu, che capo, che re ti si può dare, che tu stia quieta? Io t'ho detto altra volta che non ad ogni luogo, nè ogni paese, gli è meglio un capo solo che governi, e Santo Tomaso lo dice [Ptolomaeus de Lucca, *De regno continuatio* 4, 8], che in Italia e principi diventano tiranni, perchè qui abbonda sangue ed ingegno, chè non è così ne' paesi oltramontani."

> that he delivered. *But I am the ruling king*. The lord wants to govern you, if you want, Florence; but you should let him rule over you and you should not do what the Jews did when they demanded from Samuel a king, and God responded to Samuel: give them a king, since they do not want me to govern and rule them, and they have not despised you but rather me. You, Florence, do not behave like them: choose Christ for your king and live under His laws and with these laws He shall govern you.[341]

Savonarola contrasts the government of Christ with the single government of a tyrant or a human king. The reference to ISm 8, 7 ("And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them"; Savonarola is partially following here Thomas' *Summa theologiae* 1a2ae, q. 105, a. 1) means that the government of God annuls the government of a tyrant. What, then, does Florence need to do?

> Make sure that you shall be that Sion which was described by the psalm. Sion, i.e., speculative: that you shall be high, so that you could speculate and contemplate the divine things, and Christ shall be your leader, and He was the one who conducted the reform of sacred way of living. This reform which I have preached is nothing but a union between loving God and loving your neighbour.[342]

Savonarola presents here his solution: the government of Christ instead of the government of the tyrant and a wholesale reform of the political life, and, more generally, of the way of life of the Florentines. This reform is conducted by Christ himself and is being introduced in the sermons of the preaching prophet, who represents the union of spiritual and practical life. The reform is founded on the union of divine love and human love. There is no doubt regarding the consequence:

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[341] *Ibid*.: "Orsù, Firenze, Iddio ti vuol contentare e darti uno capo ed uno re che ti governi. E questo è Cristo: ecco el psalmo nostro che lo dice [Ps 2, 6]. *Ego autem constitutus sum rex*. El Signore ti vuole reggere Lui, se tu vorrai, Firenze, ma lasciati regere da Lui e non fare come feciono quelli Giudei che chiesono el re e Samuel e Dio rispose: Dagli el re, perchè non vogliano me che li reggevo, e governavo e non hanno disprezzato te, ma hanno disprezzato me. Tu, Firenze, non far come loro: piglia Cristo per tuo re e sta sotto la sua legge e con quella ti governa."

[342] *Ibid*., pp. 362–363: "Fa che tu sia questa Sion che dice qui el psalmo. Sion vuol dire *specula*: che tu stia alta nelle cose divine a speculare e contemplare e Cristo sia tuo capitano e Lui sia quello che ti dia la reforma del vivere santo. Quella reforma che ti s'è predicata non è altro che la unione cioè l'amore di Dio e l'amore del prossimo."

> I have told you that no one would dare to become a ruler here, since God has come to punish anyone who would dare to become a ruler and He shall throw him down. But do not be so afraid of each other, because no one can cause any harm, since God had come to cast down the arrogant. Who is our lord? He is Christ. Who stands in the place of Christ? Not the *Singoria*, but the people are the lord. But I have told you, look to your lord, i.e., the Council, just as in the military camp, everyone is looking to the commander.[343]

God had replaced the single ruler and is going to punish any one who will attempt to become a single ruler. From this description it is clear that there are still many powerful supporters of a single ruler, most of them supporters of the Medici, who are threatening and frightening the supporters of the new popular regime. This is why the preaching prophet depicts the tyrant with dark colours and, in fact, dehumanizes him, as we shall see shortly. The Great Council is, then, the king of Florence:

> What is the power given to you, Florentine nation? This is the Great Council, since just like a prince or a lord it is responsible for all the magistrates. This is your king, Florence; this is your lord.[344]

Christ the king of Florence annuls the terrestrial kingdom and makes possible a popular political practice in which the Great Council became the king.[345] There is no contradiction when Savonarola describes, on the one hand, Florence as the leading spiritual force, enlightened by divine light and serving as a model for the whole world, and, on the other hand, when he encourages Florence to learn from the government of Venice or Siena:[346] Christ, who is now conducting Florence, has replaced the tyrant and made possible a new government which can learn and imitate other good political institutions from other cities.[347]

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[343] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 427: "Io ti ho detto che nessuno si metta a fare capo qua perchè Dio è venuto a castigare chi vorrà essere capo e manderallo giù. E però non abbiate tanta paura l'uno de l'altro, perchè nessuno può fare niente perchè Dio è venuto ad abassare li superbi. Quale è il nostro Signore? Egli è Cristo. Chi tiene il luogo di Cristo? La Signoria no, ma il populo è Signore. E però io ti dico, fa di avere l'occhio al Signore, cioè al Consiglio, come si fa in campo, che tutti hanno l'occhio al capitano."

[344] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 129: "Quale è la potestà ordinata a te, popolo fiorentino? Ell'è il Consiglio grande, perchè quello come principe e signore fa tutti li offiziali. Questo è il tuo re, Firenze; questo è il tuo Signore."

[345] Savonarola contrasts Christ and the tyrant again and again in his sermons; see e.g., *Prediche*… vol. 3a, p. 196: "Che di' tu, adunque, Firenze; vuo' tu Cristo, o vuoi il tiranno per tuo signore?"

[346] Savonarola, *Prediche*… vol. 1, p. 197; vol. 2, p. 428.

[347] Felix Gilbert in his 'Florentine Political Assumptions…' p. 210, posits Savonarola's

Positing Christ as the king of Florence annuls the tyrannical government and separates the previous political practices from the new regime. As we have seen, republican institutions existed during the Medici regime, but no republican practice. Thus, the popular regime needed more than an institution such as the Great Council. It needed the preaching prophet in order to constitute a new political popular practice, and in fact, a new political culture. This popular political culture required an ethical foundation, different from that of the Medici regime, which could reinforce the new regime. For this, a radical critique of all the previous values, all related to the tyrannical government, was required; these values must be represented as evil, negative, noxious, and empty. Instead, new values should be introduced: love, common good, friendship, peace, truth, and faith, which were totally neglected by the tyrant, who preferred hate, envy, evil, corruption, hypocrisy, and false glory. The tyrant is the negation of the good in any aspect:

> Likewise [the tyrant] does not have in his mind anything other than evil. Second, his will is full of hate and envy, and he is inclined always to say: I want to pull down this man or that man. Third, he recalls always the injuries that were done to him, but he never recalls the benefits he received. Therefore, the tyrant does not have any good part in his soul, even in the sensitive parts. First, in his passions he does not have love, only selfish love; he loves his son only for his own utility. In regard to desire, he only desires to do evil; in regard to pleasures, he enjoys always murdering, sending into exile, and causing as much evil as he can; in regard to hate, he hates the truth as if it were contrary to him; in regard to friendship, the tyrant is totally deprived of any true friendship and he

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sermons in a context of traditional sermons which encoureged the belief regarding the divine inspiration of the Florentine constitution. This is very problematic. He distinguishes between a rational part in Florentine politics, where those who participate in this part try to decide rationally on political matters, and an irrational part, in which terms like necessity, fortune, or God enter and affect political decisions. These traditional sermons are part of the irrational aspect, which restricts the rational one. But such a dichotomy collapses when, as we have seen, Savonarola uses as an example the political model of Venice, which belongs to the rational part. Florentine political life is more complex, and Savonarola's slogan that Christ is the king of Florence has a political, practical, and rational significance, which is no less important than the examples from ancient Roman history used by those who, according to Gilbert, belong to the rational part. Thus, Savonarola does not belong to an irrational part of Florentine politics, and I do not think there was such a part; this idea owes more to Gilbert's own presuppositions regarding progress, rationality, and modernity, than to Florentine political practice.

> cannot regard anyone as a true friend, since he does not trust anyone and he fears even his parents and his wife.[348]

In relation to the tyrant, all values are neglected. Savonarola, as well as his foes, obviously exploit the negative connotations of the term 'tyrant', both in religious and in political contexts. It is important to notice how Savonarola assesses values: values are assessed by their practical application; the focus is on realization or non-realization of values in social and political practice. This is, of course, Aristotle's emphasis in the *NE*. This point is essential for the introduction of the opposite values. Good or evil are not considered as abstract notions but rather in their actualization and function in social and political contexts. All the values are directed towards the actualization of the new political practice which would be represented as completely opposed to tyranny. Savonarola describes the corrupt political standarts, based on negative values:

> And all the money of the Commune reaches his hands, and still he sucks, he sucks while he nourishes with a lot of money, which is the money of the Commune, the princes from other places, not for the sake of the city, but rather in order to buy their friendship, in order that they help him remain the ruler.[349]

The tyrant is completely deprived of any notion of the common good; the needs of the citizenry do not interest him, and he rules without any political responsibility. What, then, should be the new ethical basis which would make a different political culture possible? What are the contents on which the popular regime should be founded? Savonarola presents four principles:

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[348] Savonarola, *Prediche…* vol. 3a, pp. 188–189: "*Item* non pensa mai nello intelletto suo se non malignità. Secundo, ha la volontà sua piena di odio e d'invidia e appetisce sempre e dice: i' voglio abbassare quello e quello altro. Terzio, la sua memoria si ricorda sempre delle ingiurie che gli sono fatte, ma non si ricorda già mai de' benificii che riceve. *Praeterea*, el tiranno non ha parte alcuna buona nell' anima, quanto alla parte sensitiva. E prima nella concupiscibile non ha amore se non a sè proprio; non ama il figliuolo se non per sua utilità. Quanto al desiderio, non ha desiderio di fare se non male; quanto alla delettazione, si diletta sempre di fare amazzare, di confinare e far quanto male può; quanto allo odio, ha in odio la verità come cosa a lui contraria; quanto alla amicizia, è privato el tiranno d' ogni vera amicizia e non può avere alcuno per vero amico, perchè non si fida di persona e ha paura insino de' parenti e della moglie."

[349] *Ibid.*, p. 191: "E' danari del commune tutti vanno alle sue mani, e tuttavia lui suga, suga mentre che ve n' è nutrisce con li danari del commune e' principi di fuora sotto spezie di soldo, non per bisogno della città, ma per avere loro amicizia, che lo mantenghino nel regno."

> I have introduced to you four principles, beware of not following them: first, the fear of God; second, the common good; third, universal peace; fourth, the reform. You have started with the revolt, i.e., the reform, which was the last principle. Continue at least with the revolt and make this peace, which, if you would not make, it will be your end. I have told you about these six beans which required a punch, i.e., this council of the appeal, and I have explained to you in the other sermon that the *Signoria* would be stronger and more courageous [so it could do] anything.[350]

These are the four principles on which Savonarola wished to found the new social and political structure, and he repeats them in many sermons. The political change is not enough, he warns; the essence of active life has to be changed. It is important to notice that it seems that Savonarola had some kind of a plan with a certain order which was violated. But he encourages his listeners to continue, even in the opposite order, with this total change, which is regarded as the only way to avoid catastrophe. These principles and values participate in all parts of the active life in Florence; thus, love, faith, humility, and charity were written in the book of the Crucified; they were written in the books of the Apostles and prophets.[351]

As we have seen in section three, it is not possible to separate the religious, the social, and the political significance of terms and values such as love, grace, charity, and piety. All these terms were deeply related to the concrete Florentine context. Savonarola represents an admixture of traditional discussion of the Christian virtues with an emphasis on practice.

Thus we are not dealing with terms which have only spiritual meaning:

> These are the books of our life, these are the things which we should learn; but it seems to me that these books went to another library, i.e., to eternal life: here only the books of the devil were left.[352]

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[350] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 28–29: "Io ti ho detto quattro cose, se non le farai, guai a te: prima, il timore di Dio, secundo, il bene comune, terzio, la pace universale, quarto la reforma. Voi avete cominciato a rovescio, cioè alla reforma, che era l'ultima. Seguitate almeno a rovescio e fate questa pace, chè, se non la fate, sarà la ruina vostra. Io ti dixi di quelle sei fave che bisognava dargli uno bastoncello, cioè quel consiglio dello appello e cosi ti mostrai nell'altro sermone che la Signoria saria più gagliarda e più animosa a fare ogni cosa."

[351] *Ibid.*, vol. 3a, p. 468.

[352] *Ibid.*: "Questi sono e' libri della nostra vita, questi sono quelli che doverrebbono essere imparati; ma questi libri mi par che sieno andati in una altra libreria, cioè in vita eterna: qua non c'è restati se non libri del diavolo."

These books, containing these virtues, are leading to eternal life. Contrasted to them are the books of the devil and the opposed virtues: usury, avarice, and arrogance.[353] These good virtues should be the basis for any human institution, society, and government:

> If there were charity, there would be no need for so many laws for your subjects; likewise, if there were charity among friars and nuns, there would be no need for so many laws. If you, leaders, had said to your subjects:—care for each other, live in charity—, there would have been no need for other laws, and everything would have been well, if you had lived in charity.[354]

This is a very practical charity which, when practised in monasteries or states for instance, makes many of the laws of these institutions unnecessary. In his allegorical interpretation of the different parts of the Holy Ark, which represented Christ, the Church, and the Virgin, Savonarola focuses on the relations between virtues and government:

> It is full from within of divine wisdom, and of speculative knowledge from without, since it has the government of the practices and, regarding this wisdom, there is no one who comes near to it. The crown above signifies its excellency, since she is the mother of the eternal king and, in fact, the queen of the whole universe. And the four rings are the four cardinal virtues, those which are in the Virgin, these four virtues are in political life, but they are nothing in comparison with the virtues of the Virgin. In the political life of the philosophers prudence is for public government; justice is for the distribution of offices; temperance is for honourable life; courage is for [the willingness to] sacrifice the life for the sake of the common good.[355]

The perfect virtues, which are related to any aspect of government, are in the Virgin; the same virtues exist in political life, but they are incomparable to those which are in the Virgin. These virtues are described in

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353 *Ibid.*

354 *Ibid.*, p. 469: "Se ci fussi carità, non bisogneria tante legge per li tua sudditi; così se fussi carità tra' frati e tra le monache, non bisogneria tante legge. Se voi, capi, dicessi a' vostri sudditi:—amiamoci insieme, stiamo in carità—, non bisogneria altra legge, e anderia ogni cosa bene, se si vivessi in carità."

355 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 247: "E piena drento di sapienzia divina e delle scienze speculative di fuori, perchè ha el governo delle pratiche e in questa sapienzia nessuno se le appropinqua. La corona di sopra significa la sua excellenzia, perchè è madre del re eterno e regina ancora di tutto l'universo. E quattro anelli sono le quattro virtù cardinali le quali sono nella Vergine, le quali quattro virtù sono nella vita politica, ma a comparazione di quelle della Vergine sono nulla. Nella vita politica de' filosofi la prudenzia è pel governo pubblico; la iustizia è in distribuire gli officii; la temperanzia in vivere onestamente; la fortezza in mettere la vita per il ben comune."

their practical aspect, and they are regarded as an essential ethical basis for every government. Wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage are functioning in active life, but this is now a different active life which is related to the new popular regime. The duty of the preaching prophet is to relate the perfect virtues of government, which are in the supreme spiritual area of the Virgin, to practical active life. He is in a position to do it since he represents contemplative perfection realized in active life. Thus, divine love has to serve as a practical model for human love. Now a new political culture can be established:

> It is thus necessary that when you nominate or elect someone, you do it according to these three things which I now present: first, that you consider the honour of God and that the one you nominate would be a good man; second, that he shall have respect for the common good and not for the private good; third, [that he shall have] good customs and [that he shall respect] the honour of your city. And if you see that he lives according to these three things, elect him and give him the black bean; but if he has a weak character, although he is a good man, do not elect him, since he is deprived of the honour of God, and he could not take care of the common good and honour the reputation of your city; you would be deprived of all these if you elect such a weak person. If there are two candidates, one who is prudent, and another who is good but not prudent, you have to elect the first one, i.e., the prudent. As Saint Thomas said, goodness without prudence is not enough in these things since human beings are not like the angels, that as much as they are good, they are also more intelligent.[356]

The preaching prophet introduces here before his listeners rules and criteria for electing the magistrates; choosing the suitable men is the most important element; the abilities and the way of life of the candidates are more important than their social status. Good behaviour and a good way of life should be the criteria for prudence in society and politics, and not old age.[357] Thus, a good reputation should be mea-

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[356] *Ibid.*, pp. 389–390: "È necessario adunque quando tu nomini uno, o che si elegge, che tu facci queste tre cose che io ti dirò qui adesso; primo che tu volti l'occhio a l'onore di Dio e che colui che tu nomini sia buono e secondo che tu abbi rispetto al ben commune e non particulare; terzio al buono e costumato vivere ed allo onore della tua città; e se tu vedi che quel tale sia secondo queste tre cose, eleggilo e dagli la fave nera; ma se gli è uno sciocco, benchè e' sia buono, non lo fare, perchè manca qui l'onore di Dio, manca il ben commune e l'onore e la reputazione della tua città, la quale tu togli eleggendo uno che non sia atto. Se sono dua, un prudente ed un buono e non prudente, debbi eleggere el primo, cioè il prudente. Come dice Santo Tommaso, che non basta la bontà, senza la prudenzia in queste cose e che non sono li uomini come li angeli, che quanto di più bontà sono, hanno tanta più intelligenzia."

[357] *Ibid.*, vol. 3b, p. 33: "… tu ti dai ad intendere che li capelli canuti in capo ti dieno

sured by acts. This was the framework which made it possible to reload virtues and values with republican contents which were very concrete and practical in Florentine political life. It made it possible for Savonarola to discuss political institutions, and so, he encourages the Florentines to build the hall for the Great Council, the most important institution of the new popular regime:

> Therefore, first of all build this hall, and do it very fast, not like the cow which slowly moves. Indeed, sollicit from everyone who can donate money, in order to build it quickly. I already know who is willing to lend money for this. It is the Prior's task to solicit funds for it. In spite of the fact that there is no impending danger right now for this Great Council, you must hurry and do what has to be done, danger might appear and it is necessary to see it in advance. I have been thinking about your parliament and it seems to me nothing but a distraction. It is necessary to avoid it. People, do it quickly: are you not now the masters, you? Yes. Do you not have the government in your hands, you? Yes. Beware lest there may not be any parliament, if you do not want to lose your political power.[358]

These are very concrete political instructions. Parliament is a small elected council, to which the more experienced aristocrats can be elected; its purpose was to restore political power to the aristocrats, the *ottimati*, who opposed the popular reform. In 1502 such a council was established and it served as a weapon of the aristocrats.[359] The establishment of such a council was one of the ways of Piero de' Medici's supporters to try to restore his government in the city.[360]

The preaching prophet is thus instructing the supporters of the popular regime. The duty of the Great Council was to restrict the power of the *Signoria*;[361] if the *Signoria* uses its power for injuring the

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autorità di prudenzia. Io ti dico che la esperienzia della buona vita è quella sola che ti farà riputar prudente, non li capelli canuti."

[358] *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 391: "*Praeterea* fate mandare innanzi questa sala e che la vada presto, non come il bue che va pian piano. Orsù sollecitatela ed ognuno presti danari, chi può, per mandarla innanzi. Io so già chi ne vuole prestare. Il sollecitare questa sala s'appartiene a' Signori. Questo Consiglio grande, benchè ora non ci sia pericolo che si guasti, pure per le cose che hanno ad essere, potria venire il pericolo e però è necessario provvedere prima. Io ho pensato a questo tuo parlamento che non mi pare che sia altro che uno distruggimento. E però è necessario di levarlo via. Popolo, fatti innanzi: non se' tu ora Signore, tu? Si, non hai tu il reggimento nelle mani, tu? Si. Or guarda che non si facci parlamento, se tu non vuoi perdere il governo tuo."

[359] Rubinstein, 'Politics…' pp. 180–181.

[360] Villari, *Life*… pp. 291–293.

[361] Savonarola, *Prediche*… vol. 2, p. 12.

citizens its power must be restricted.[362] The *Signoria* used to be related to the powerful rich citizens and it supported the old Medici regime. It acted unjustly and always preferred the powerful rich citizens.[363] The purpose of establishing the Great Council was to change this; its activity was meant to help in the realization of more justice in Florentine society and government. In the same way the magistrates had to fulfill their duty in a just way and not to chase human glory.[364]

The popular regime and its institutions were founded upon a political culture and an active life at the basis of which there was the realization of virtues and values like love, piety, charity, friendship, justice, peace, and the common good. These virtues could be reloaded with republican contents through the activity of the preaching prophet, who related the contemplative spiritual area, in which these virtues were perfectly realized, to the concrete active life in which he was deeply involved. His exeptional authority was due both to the spiritual and political crisis in Florence during the 1490s, and to the aspirations for spiritual and political revival formulated in the new humanist theology.

Savonarola, the preaching prophet, represented a realization of the essential moments of revelation, so important for Ficino for the revival of religion, i.e., the revival of the relation between man and God. He represented the border between the human and the divine, and at the same time, the possibility of crossing this border, and reaching a more concrete notion of the divinity, so needed at the present state of declining Christianity.

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[362] *Ibid.*: "… se la vuole questa autorità per fare male e torto alli cittadini, questo non debbe essere comportato e non la debbe avere."

[363] *Ibid.*

[364] *Ibid.*, pp. 141–142.

CONCLUSION

In this book I have tried to highlight the importance of the evolution of humanist theology, as a response to contemporary tensions in the religious and political spheres, for an understanding of Florentine humanism and its relations to religion and politics in the final decades of the fifteenth century. Humanist theology should be seen as the culmination of a tendency to bring pagan classical texts and Scriptures into relation with one another. This tendency can already be observed in patristic and scholastic theology, due to the tension in Christianity between the Greek *logos* and the Christian *logos*, already implied in the New Testament and seen most clearly in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Yet, because of the rediscovery of so much of Greek and Roman pagan literature, the growing admiration for pre-Christian antiquity, and the development of new philological and historical methods, the new humanist theology is different in quality from its predecessors. It was one of the last moments before the post-Tridentine world, in which theology remained relatively open to non-Christian classical culture, even at the expense of much of the mediaeval tradition. The Catholic world after the Council of Trent, more than half a century later than the period we discussed in this book, was completely different.[1]

[1] For one example, see Salvatore Camporeale, 'Giovanmaria dei Tolosani O.P.: 1530–1546. Umanesimo, riforma, e teologia controversista', in *Memorie Domenicane* 17 (1986), pp. 145–252; see e.g., p. 173: "Per Agostino dunque il canone biblico, già fissato dalla tradizione magisteriale della Chiesa e perciò stesso non più discutibile, s'impone, per quanto corcerne la sua autenticità, in virtù di se stessa. Qualora sorgessero delle difficoltà testuali, queste potranno e dovranno risolversi, sia in positivo che in negativo, in base a criteri soggettivi con particolare riferimento allo scriba (trascrizione non fedele), all'interprete (traduzione non esatta dal testo originale), al lettore (comprensione non adeguata del testo biblico). In altri termini, la critica filologica che eventualmente ponesse in atto l'esegesi dei libri canonici non può, senza estrapolazione indebita, mettere in dubbio l'autenticità originaria dei testi scritturistici. L'*auctoritas* di Agostino veniva rievocata dal Tolosani—ancora una volta—per controbattere il "filologismo" dei gerolamisti contemporanei, "cattolici e riformati". Con la motivazione etico-pastorale, di cui sopra, e l'argomentazione agostiniana, l'una e l'altra convergenti nell'unico obbietivo di riaffermare il primato assoluto della tradizione magisteriale della Chiesa, il Domenicano spostava il discorso, senza nulla concedere al dissenso, dalla crit-

The term 'humanist theology', which connects humanism directly to theology and religion, might be regarded by some scholars as a contradiction in terms, on account of the long-standing, though misguided, belief that the Renaissance was essentially secular or even pagan. I hope, however, that I have managed to demonstrate the term's historical validity in relation to Florence from the early 1460s to the end of the 1490s. In this period we find religious and theological discussions with almost no reference to the Doctors of the Church, who are regarded merely as part of the general education of a Christian. We also encounter explicit criticisms of scholastic theology, and we observe the emergence of a novel way of discussing theological matters and of interpreting the Bible. All this points to a new theology, developed in response to a deep spiritual crisis.

This theology resulted not only from the new philological and historical methods of the humanists; it was also the product of rediscovering a new body of texts: the *prisci theologi*, Plato, and the Neoplatonic philosophers. This pagan Greek corpus, almost entirely unknown to scholastic theology, was considered by some Florentine writers to be more relevant to theological discussions than scholastic Aristotelian philosophy. This suggests a new manner of conceiving the relationship between the Greek *logos* and the Christian *logos*, different from that found in the Augustinian or the Thomist traditions. The fifteenth century was a period in which a vast quantity of Greek philosophical texts, and many Roman ones as well, were introduced to the Latin West. New arguments and modes of thought derived from this ancient philosophy were deployed to sort out the relation between opinion and faith, the human and the divine, and other theological questions. Thus, Neoplatonic metaphysics was central to Ficino's theological perspective as was Academic skepticism to Pico's. These two thinkers represent a return to philosophy and metaphysics after Valla's anti-philosophical approach (and the general preference of many humanists for rhetoric, because they regarded philosophy and metaphysics as scholastic disciplines). But despite their different attitudes towards philosophy, Valla, on the one hand, and Ficino and Pico on the other, rejected and attacked scholastic theology, made ample use of classical sources, and adopted philological and critical approaches.

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ica filologica all'apologetica intransigente dell'ortodossia contro qualsiasi ricerca teologica alternativa."

The inseparability of the spiritual and political crises, and consequently the inseparability of their solutions in humanist theology, has been demonstrated in this book analysing a variety of sources in which religious terminology and imagery appear in a political context and in which political terminology and imagery appear in a religious context. Yet, while on a speculative and theological level humanist theology stressed the distinction between the 'human' and the 'divine', on the practical and political level, its anti-Medicean rhetoric demanded a reuniting of the spiritual and the political realms.

Research on the thought of Ficino and Pico has so far concentrated mainly on *what* they wrote. I believe, however, that investigating *why* they wrote is no less important. Like all thinkers, they did not work in a vacuum but rather against the religious, political, and intellectual background of their age. It is becoming increasingly accepted by scholars that this was a period of deep spiritual crisis affecting the Church, its theology, and its institutions. Thinkers such as Ficino, in his *De Christiana religione* of 1474, attempted to offer a solution to this crisis in the form of a new humanist theology incorporating newly recovered philosophical texts, especially Plato and Neoplatonic literature in the original Greek, and rejecting most of mediaeval theology. Pico's nine hundred theses of 1486 and his *Apologia* of 1487 represent a similar attempt to produce a new humanist theology. In the theses, according to my discussion in chapter four, he intended to provide some answers to the theological crisis of his time, and in the *Apologia* he explained some theoretical considerations which lay behind the theses. It is against this background that we should consider the work of both Ficino and Pico.[2]

Even though I have focused on humanists and their relation to religion and theology, it is important not to forget that professional theologians such as Giovanni Caroli or preachers such as Savonarola also displayed a keen interest in classical texts; indeed, it is impossible to understand Caroli without paying attention to his Virgilian imagery and references. His cultural world was composed of the Scriptures together with certain classical poets and historians. Although he admired mediaeval culture, he criticized some of its institutions. He rejected the new culture of the Renaissance, but at the same time he was aware that he himself was part of this culture. It was purely humanist influences which led him to write a local history of his monastery, Santa Maria

[2] My approach here is not unlike R.G. Collingwood's 'logic of question and answer'. See his *Autobiography* (London 1939), pp. 24–33.

Novella, and its illustrious friars. This was part of the reform which he initiated and which was rejected both by the master general of his order and by the pope—it was also the reason for his exile in Lucca and for a serious personal crisis. This reform involved taking into account the unique tradition and history of each monastery and, in this way, preserving its autonomy and liberty, as well as presenting republican Roman institutions as a model for running the Dominican Order and monasteries. His demand for *libertas conventus* should be regarded both in a biblical and religious context and in a classical and civic one as a struggle against the tyrants and tyranny of the past (early Christianity) and of the present (those in control of the Dominican Order and of monastic life). Writing the history of his monastery was also analogous to the civic tradition of Florentine humanist chancellors who wrote histories of their city. Thus, for Caroli, writing this history was both a religious and a political act, by means of which he was trying to protect the autonomy and liberty of his monastery from the threat of a compulsory reform conducted by the master general of his order. This act of commemorating an illustrious past was intended as a criticism of the forgetfulness of the present—a present which, according to Caroli, was suffering from a spiritual crisis and therefore needed to be reformed, but from within, not from above. Caroli's perception of the relation between the monastery and the city, between religious and political reform, and between religion and politics in the Florentine city-state, as set out in his *Liber dierum lucensium*, is by no means straightforward and requires more detailed study of other professional theologians and humanists: Lorenzo Pisano, for instance, who is mentioned by Caroli but has received hardly any attention from modern scholars.

Humanist theology as practised in humanist sermons was less technical than the thematic sermons of the scholastics and was therefore available to a larger audience extending beyond professional theologians. Disseminating and explaining theological doctrines by translating them into Italian was an important feature of humanist, as opposed to scholastic, theology. It also entailed treating the Bible not as a prooftext but rather as a historical account of God's acts, a *historia divina* on the model of classical *res gestae*, together with an intensive reliance on classical literature, both history and philosophy. So, both biblical and classical models were central to humanist theology, with a unique status accorded to Church Fathers such as Augustine and Jerome; the mediaeval theological tradition however is almost entirely absent. On the other hand, we find in some humanist writings of the period a return to

more traditional themes such as prophecy and miracles, which play an important role in Ficino's theological thinking as well as in Savonarola's reform vision.

In Ficino's *De Christiana religione*, the pre-Christian ancient theology, together with the post-Christian philosophy of Neoplatonism, play the role of *praeambula fidei*, just as Aristotelian philosophy had done in scholastic theology. So, the fundamental theological distinction between the 'human' and the 'divine' is retained. When discussing Christ's acts, however, Ficino emphasizes his human aspects, and when describing the Apostles, he stresses their divine nature. It is clear that we cannot understand Ficino's philosophy unless we realize that for him, it is religion which gives man his preeminence in nature. The poor state into which Christianity, the culmination of all religions and civilizations, has descended in his day is Ficino's main concern. His solution to the crisis he perceives around him is the reuniting of the philosopher and the priest, on the model of Melchizedek or Christ. His renewal of theology also included a new emphasis on divine revelation in Scripture, as revealed through miracles and prophecies. This was what gave Scripture its divine aspect; and it was because the Doctors and most of the Fathers of the Church were not representatives of divine revelation that Ficino passed them over in silence.

Pico's response to the papal commission in his *Apologia* is, in reality, a detailed attack on the scholastic theology of his time and its failure to distinguish adequately between revealed and non-revealed truth. While he adopted the scholastic 'Parisian' style of discussion, he altered it from within by using concepts, arguments, and modes of thought derived from the ancient skeptical Academy, which he had learned from the texts of Cicero and Augustine. His focus in the *Apologia* was on theological opinions and their status, and he made use of new philological and historical methods.

I would like to end these Conclusions with two quotations, the first from Eugenio Garin and the second from Cesare Vasoli. When I first began to work on this study, I found these passages inspiring, especially the disturbing intuitions they contain regarding the relations between humanists and Savonarola, and, more generally, the relation of Florentine humanism to religion and theology. I hope that my exploration of the new humanist theology as a response to a profound spiritual and political crisis in late fifteenth century Florence has contributed to a better understanding of these complex relations.

> Savonarola porto l'invettiva dal terreno retorico sul piano della riforma practica; delle argomentazioni del Pico fece strumento per un preciso moto novatore; del sogno ficianiano di un *nuovo secolo* fece una profezia capace di trascinare le folle. Se esaminiamo il contenuto delle sua predicazione noi non troviamo elementi diversi o contrastanti con quelli insegnati nei circoli culturali fiorentini…[3]

> Che un uomo come il Nesi, cosi legato ad un'interpretazione religiosa e 'devota' del platonismo ficiniano, potesse poi aderire, il piu vivo entusiasmo, alla predicazione savonaroliana e, quindi, cosa facilmente comprensibile. Ne puo stupire, nel suo caso, come in quello di altri 'accademici' divenuti devoti del Frate di S. Marco, la continuita e il nesso diretto tra le due esperienze, il sovrapporsi dell'esoterismo e dell'ermetismo ficiniano alla scabra invocazione riformatrice del domenicano, la fusione, infine, della celebrazione platonica del 'saeculum aureum' con la profezia della 'renovatio' e dell'avvento dell'unico, universale Regno di Dio.[4]

[3] Garin, *La cultura filosofica*… p. 179.
[4] Vasoli, 'Giovanni Nesi…' p. 116.

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